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# Guilt, Suffering and the Psyche

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## **Abstract**

The topic of this thesis is guilt. The thesis begins by considering the broad context of guilt as conceptualised across the humanities and social sciences. It then focuses on the extensive work done on guilt in psychoanalysis. The main contributions to the debates on guilt in psychoanalysis are investigated in detail to isolate the key issues in trying to understand guilt.

The key question approached concerns the origin of guilt and its functioning in psychological life. The thesis shows how previous theorists have struggled to identify a plausible explanation for the presence of guilt in mental functioning and in particular for the suffering generated by pathogenic guilt. It argues that there are impasses in the work of Freud, Klein and others that prevent their being able to fully account for guilt. It employs insights and argument from the work of Jacques Lacan to proceed beyond those impasses.

While the emphasis in the work of previous theorists was on trying to identify what subjects were really guilty of, beyond their superficial self-reproaches, this thesis argues that the avowal of guilt by subjects functions as a device to keep anxiety at a distance and, functioning as such, it is inherently deceptive.

The thesis shows that Lacan revisits problems raised in his Ethics seminar from 1959-60 in 1972-3 in his Seminar XX 'Encore'. The theoretical developments in the later seminar show that the inscription of subjects in a sexed order is regulated by their relation to the signifier and produces differentials in relation to the law and Other *jouissance*. While most guilt theories argue that guilt is a 'fault' in the human being,

Lacan's theoretical work allows us to argue that guilt is a 'fault' that is constructed in the moment of the construction of human subjectivity.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Thesis and Overview of Guilt.

The laws of conscience which we say are born of Nature, are born of custom; since man inwardly venerates the opinions and the manners approved and received about him, he cannot without remorse free himself from them nor apply himself to them without self-approbation.

Montaigne (2003[1580]) *Essays* Book 1, Ch. 23  
'On habit: and on never easily changing a traditional law'

#### Background to the research.

The research being undertaken is concerned with guilt. Guilt is arguably a serious and extensive (if not universal) social and psychological problem. As such, it might be imagined that study of guilt would be comparably extensive but this is not the case. The reasons for this are complex and a function of historical development and, in particular, of developments in the history of ideas. While this question cannot be addressed properly here, it is worth remarking on selected issues. In as much as guilt has been an object of study, it has historically been the province of three main fields - law, theology and philosophy. It is in the nineteenth century, with the development of social science fields that guilt becomes re-conceptualised as a sociological, psychological and anthropological problem. From the late nineteenth century it becomes a psychoanalytic problem and also a focus for literary and later cultural<sup>1</sup> analysis. The relative promiscuity of guilt may account for the relative lack of sustained and systematic study of it. Two main problems result from this: first guilt is conceptualised in very diverse

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<sup>1</sup> Among other examples, in 1999, Middlesex University hosted a conference on 'Guilt and Visual Representation.'

ways, with very divergent questions propelling investigation so that the researcher has to contend with the idiosyncrasies of a range of disciplines (guilt has been dealt with in a multi-disciplinary rather than an interdisciplinary way); and second, most of these discipline areas touch on guilt tangentially so that in most cases it has been studied superficially rather than intensively.

The thesis begins by providing an overview of guilt so that some of the issues raised above are considered. The aim of this overview is also to contextualise the study as a whole, to delineate the scope and terms of the investigation, to show what the focus will be and why, to specify the questions which the research will pursue and to provide a background and introduction to the remainder of the thesis.

This introductory chapter proceeds through a schematic assessment of the main ways guilt has been discussed and represented in Western intellectual and philosophical traditions. Themes, impasses, and oddities are noted, as they will form the basis for later analysis. This chapter concludes with the idea that since psychoanalysis has produced the most sustained and deep consideration of guilt to date, it is there that we will find the most fruitful work for further analysis. The remainder of the thesis focuses specifically on the work of Freud and a number of his key followers.

Freud's ground-breaking and developing ideas on guilt are examined in detail. This is followed by an examination of the work of Ernest Jones, chosen because, almost alone in the field, he provides a very deep and detailed examination of guilt and because his



ideas are close to, yet diverge in crucial respects from, those of Freud. Melanie Klein's highly influential work is looked at next. She provides a wealth of clinical observation and ideas about guilt that change over the course of her work. Her ideas draw initially on Freud's but differ in important respects. The work of these three is examined very closely to assess how theoretical work on guilt developed and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of it. Later work by Jacques Lacan is then examined in depth.

Lacan had argued for the importance of returning to the radical core of Freud's work and in the course of doing so, he produced readings of Freud that try to re-instate the alterity of the unconscious. In his Ethics seminar, he addresses the question of guilt in Freud and engages with the impasses that Freud was trying to deal with. Lacan's later work offers possibilities for progressing the debate on guilt beyond the impasses encountered in the work of the others and in his own early formulations. This is supported by the work of one of his students, Michel Sylvestre.

Many other psychoanalytic theorists have written about guilt and some will be alluded to in the course of the study. The four major theorists form the core interest of the thesis as they have produced significant and substantial contributions to the specific theorisation of guilt and there is ample scope in and through their work to investigate the problem.

Freud's work has been the focus of much academic study, and while others have considered aspects of his theory of guilt, it has not previously been charted in detail.

Jones work, and especially his work on guilt, has not been the focus of previous in-depth academic study. Klein and Lacan are the objects of study in recent academic work, though infrequently at the same time and not specifically in relation to guilt. Michel Sylvestre's work is virtually unknown outside France and relatively little there. The thesis engages in original research in both assessing the work of these theorists and in proposing new lines of development.

### **An Overview of Guilt**

Guilt is considered below from the viewpoints of Religion, Philosophy, Law, Sociology and Psychology. These are treated in chronological order of their earliest contributions to the discussion although it is often very difficult to maintain both discipline and time boundaries. The discussion in this chapter is very wide-ranging and therefore necessarily superficial and schematic. Many individual paragraphs consider issues that could form the basis of an extended study in themselves. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the topic, to provide some historical and intellectual background (albeit cursory) and context for the topic's exploration and to highlight some interesting anomalies and oddities that require examination.

### **Guilt as a religious/theological problem**

Sumerian creation-poetry from before 2000 BC refers to a hero-god Marduk who reputedly triumphed over a mythical evil dragon Timat. Timat's offspring however avenged this defeat by spreading disease among the Sumerians. Disease was regarded by the Sumerians as indicative of human guilt for having sinned against the gods

(Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 50). Ancient Greek gods often required their subjects to undertake impossible tasks with a view to their inevitable failure followed by further punishment and totemic cultures imposed heavy penalties for insufficient observation of totem rules.

In Judaism, Old Testament Christianity and Islam an all-knowing God forms the basis for monotheism. In Judaism and Christianity, early texts present a picture of a God whose will is infinite and whose ways are incomprehensible in the literal sense of being beyond the knowledge limits of human beings. God is to be obeyed! Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden for disobedience. Abraham passes the test of obedience as he is willing to sacrifice his son to/for God without question. Job, on the contrary, is made to suffer until he realises that his place is not to question. Moses receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. They are not for consideration or negotiation – they are orders. Guilt, in this context, is relatively simple. If agency resides solely in God then the only form of guilt in humans is guilt resulting from not following God's commandments - however incomprehensible. The psychological ramifications of the idea of an all-powerful external agency that must be obeyed will be considered later. It is also important to note here that God is an agency to be feared (an avenging or wrathful God). The relation of guilt and fear is one that will be looked at in more depth later.

It is later interpretations of the Fall, which produce the doctrine of Original Sin. Adam and Eve were specifically instructed not to eat of the tree of knowledge of

good and evil in the Garden of Eden. This act of disobedience forms the basis for a state of Original Sin into which all human beings are born. From this viewpoint everyone is born with guilt. This condition is essentially irredeemable except by the intervention of a Redeemer or at the day of judgement. Between 450 and 400 BC the Torah, encapsulating Judaic morality, is incorporated into the Jewish state and in AD the birth of Christ signals a new relation to God for Christians. In the centuries leading up to the birth of Christ, the Greeks were developing moral philosophy and ethics in ways that would have far-reaching consequences for Western culture.

In Islam, committing *kabira* (sin) can prevent the sinner from gaining admission to Paradise. Hinduism and Buddhism are supposed not to be afflicted with the kind of guilt torment associated with the three related monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to Oppenheimer:

The Hindu perception of the universe . . . and of human relations within it, is fundamentally positive. Human disobedience and guilt play no part in the harmony of its universal cyclical repetitions.

Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 51

This apparent significant religious-cultural rift is of some importance for the subject of this thesis. However, it will not be possible to examine comparative religions in any depth as that is beyond the scope of the study as it is essentially limited to examining ideas within the Western intellectual and philosophical traditions.

## **Guilt as a Philosophical Problem**

Socrates' moral philosophy relied on the idea that inner knowledge could be used as a guide to right behaviour. Socrates taught that if people searched their souls, they would know what was right and would therefore be incapable of committing wrongs. If people did commit wrongs it was a question of knowledge that was at stake. Plato followed this with the idea of 'forms' only properly accessible to philosopher-kings who could guide or coerce others to moral behaviour. Aristotle's pragmatic ethics are articulated in *The Nichomachean Ethics*. In essence he argues that if you choose to do something wrong, then you have to take the punishment. The only escape clauses are, if you have been compelled by someone else, or you made a mistake. His ideas on morality link closely and explicitly to his ideas on causality. This is actually the case for all religions and philosophies in relation to guilt. A fundamental feature of all theories of guilt is that they are necessarily allied to theories about causality. As we saw above in the discussion of religion, where people accept an all-powerful God or Gods and attribute sole agent status to them, they are left in no position to wonder about the effects of their own behaviour. They are pawns in a game over which they have no influence. They have no causality.

In 529 AD Plato's Academy was closed and Western moral philosophy became effectively a branch of Christian theology. St Augustine provided a basis for the Christian idea of guilt based on a blend of Platonism and Christianity that persisted until Aquinas re-thought Christian doctrine in tandem with Aristotelianism in the thirteenth century. Augustine, a convert to Christianity, following a miss-spent youth

which he describes in his *Confessions*, claims a haunting sense of sin which he strives to overcome. This sin is inherited from Adam's original sin but thankfully a merciful God has allowed the human race to continue, if in perpetual guilt. God's grace and mercy are sought to alleviate guilt.

By the late Middle Ages Lutheran conceptions of guilt impacted on earlier Catholic dogma,

. . . [it was] maintained by the Church and many Protestant sects, that each person's thoughts were without question the result of his or her character. As character was taken to include ethical choices, all mental activities, no matter how squeamish and cloistered, revealed the true state of anyone's integrity and corruption. People everywhere could thus indeed be held responsible for their thoughts, dreams and nightmares. They might sin while asleep or while musing in a chair. No distinction was made between thought and deed, and the sin of lust, for example, or murder, could incur as much guilt if committed mentally as physically. Imaginary sex or murder was, and for traditional believers still is, as guilt-infected as real sex or real murder.

Oppenheimer, 1997, p.65

This conception of guilt concerns volition, responsibility and intent all of which will play a part in our later discussions of guilt and especially the distinctions between consciousness and unconsciousness.

Hobbes' 'Social Contract' was designed to ensure that the innately destructive and selfish inclinations of human beings were kept in check for the good of the social order. This remains compatible with the idea of 'original sin'. This was opposed by

Rousseau's romantic idea that too much intervention by government was a bad thing and that people's natural inclination to good required fostering via non-corrupt education of children and closer relations to nature. In *A Treatise on Human Nature* Hume argues that moral knowledge is not deducible via reason and logic and that moral arguments are no more than someone's subjective feelings about something. Bentham and Mill's utilitarian philosophy sought moral knowledge in reckoning the greatest sum of happiness to result from a proposed action.

The influential work of Emmanuel Kant relied on the notion of duty. Kant relies on practical reason to arrive at a categorical imperative - the right way to act in any circumstance. The subject of the Kantian world has to struggle constantly towards moral duty and away from self-indulgence - but is helped in this process by reason and imagination because immorality is always illogical and the universal consequences of immorality are imaginable.

In the modern period other influential ideas on guilt emerge from the works of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

Before we leave philosophy it is worth referring to a theme of relevance to the question of guilt. This concerns the classification of affects and emotions such as in Aristotle's passions, Hume's direct or indirect passions and Spinoza's active or passive emotions. There are also distinctions made between moral and social emotions – guilt, remorse and shame being viewed as 'moral' emotions. The question

of affect is one we will address in several places in the thesis.

### **Guilt as a Legal Problem**

Guilt, of course, is a legal category. The criminal justice system<sup>2</sup> is, officially at least, designed to determine whether someone is 'Guilty' or 'Not Guilty'. Guilt means first of all that someone has been 'found' guilty - that their action or inaction (in as much as these can be reasonably determined) has been judged, by the appropriate authority, to be the cause of some injury or loss. Only secondarily do difficult arguments in law hinge around 'intention' or 'wilfulness'. Some laws require 'intent' to be 'proved'. A person may be guilty but not feel guilt. Equally a person may feel guilty but not be guilty (at least in a legal sense).

The question of an authority (against which or whom one has transgressed) seems to be as fundamental to guilt as the idea of an audience is to one who feels shame. Some theories suggest that while shame has a specular dimension - one has to be seen or to imagine being seen to feel shame, one has to have a conception of an authority of some sort against which or whom one feels one has transgressed in order for guilt to exist ( Schweder and Levine, 1984).

In English law the idea of jury trial is understood to be of Norman origin. Under the 'Criminal justice Act of 1967' verdicts in criminal courts are either 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. A jury of twelve people between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five must

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<sup>2</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into questions of comparative law. The points made here refer to English Law.



come to a decision, whereby at least ten of the twelve must agree. In Scots Law, fifteen jurors are chosen by ballot from a panel of forty-five. A majority verdict is accepted and it can be 'guilty', 'not guilty' or 'not proven'. Thus, although a judge presides over a case and can be very influential in its outcome, authority resides in the jury. The determination of guilt therefore lies with a kind of common-sense finding made by non-professionals. This is interesting because in virtually every other 'professional' field qualified experts have the final say. However, there is no doubt that the work of professionals has a significant influence on the process; this has historically been that of solicitors and barristers but in recent years has also called on the work of others such as pathologists, forensic scientists and psychiatrists. It is also more and more frequently argued that trials can be influenced by media intervention - the collapse of a high-profile case involving Leeds United football players (April 2001) was linked directly with the reporting of a tabloid newspaper.

Early law treats a criminal act as an objective fact and does not consider the intention of the criminal. The act must be paid for irrespective of the criminal's intentions. The concept of intent is formalised in English law for the first time in the twelfth century under the term *mens rea* or guilty mind. In the thirteenth century Bracton introduced the notion of the 'will to harm' and the idea that 'a crime is not committed unless a guilty intention intercedes' (Jacobs, 1971, p. 14). Conscience therefore became a factor in Law at this time.

## **Guilt as a Social Scientific Problem**

Sociological and anthropological accounts of guilt have, for example, compared modern guilt with naïve guilt (Carroll, 1985) and guilt cultures with shame cultures (Schweder and Levine, 1984) or have theorised guilt as a form of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1985).

The idea of the noble savage contributed to early ethnocentric anthropology. Aboriginal culture was held up as an example of a culture embodying limited repression and limited guilt (Róheim, 1932). A lack of guilt was viewed as indicative of a lack of civilisation and ‘naïve’ or ‘primitive’ societies were thought to rely more on shaming as a mechanism for ensuring law and order. A trend developed following the publication of Ruth Benedict’s influential study of Japanese culture *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in 1946, which distinguished between what were thought to be ‘guilt’ cultures and ‘shame’ cultures. The general thesis is based on the idea that people have destructive impulses that require societal control and that prohibitions based on affective mechanisms serve to check selfish and asocial strivings. The gaze of the prohibiting other generates shame and the voice of inner morality generates guilt. This has in turn led to the idea of a distinction between shame as a specular phenomenon, always requiring an audience (real or imagined) and guilt as an auditory phenomenon, always dependent upon a voice<sup>3</sup> (real or imagined) (Piers and Singer, 1971). This idea of the importance of the voice is one that will be examined further.

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<sup>3</sup> This may be attested in the popular notion of the ‘voice of conscience’.

In *The Managed Heart*, Arlie Hochschild discusses her research on the ‘emotional labour’ of air stewardesses. She has a number of innovative ideas about the ‘labour’ encapsulated in emotional exchanges:

The party guest summons up a gaiety owed to the host, the mourner summons up a proper sadness for a funeral. Each offers up feeling as a momentary contribution to the collective good. In the absence of an English-language name for feelings-as-contribution-to-the-group (which the more group-centred Hopi culture called *arofa*), I shall offer the concept of a gift exchange. Muted anger, conjured gratitude, and suppressed envy are offerings back and forth from parent to child, wife to husband, friend to friend, and lover to lover.

Hochschild, 1985, p18

Hochschild goes on to elaborate a theory of emotional exchanges conditioned by power and status differentials. Those at the ‘top’ make the ‘feeling rules’ i.e. how things are to be understood as ‘feeling’, regulate emotional exchange and require certain kinds of emotional response from their subordinates.

Authority carries with it a certain mandate over feeling rules. A parent may show a child how much fear to feel about the new bull terrier on the block. An English [German? AH] literature professor may suggest to students how strongly they should feel about Rilke’s first Duino Elegy. A supervisor may comment on a cheer worn thin in a secretary’s “Here’s your correspondence, sir.” It is mainly the authorities who are the keepers of feeling rules.”

Hochschild, 1985, p75

Aspects of Hochschild’s thesis will be examined later. However for the moment we can pick up on a particular comment she makes about guilt.

Most of the time, gratitude comes naturally, thoughtlessly and without effort. Only when it comes hard do we recognise what has been true; all along: that we keep a mental ledger with "owed" and "received" columns for gratitude, love, anger, guilt, and other feelings.

Hochschild, 1985, p78

What is this emotional accounting process, from whence does it come and what are its implications for any theory of guilt? The idea of a mental ledger of guilt owed and received ties in with a repeated theme in discussions of guilt – that of debt.<sup>4</sup>

If we cannot manage to enjoy or feel grateful, we may at least manage to feel guilty for not enjoying what another has given. Guilt or worry may function as a promissory note. Guilt upholds feeling rules from the inside: it is an internal acknowledgement of an unpaid psychological debt. Even "I should feel guilty" is a nod in the direction of guilt, a weaker confirmation of what is owed.

Hochschild, 1985, p 82

It is significant how often guilt is talked about as being connected to accounts - debits and credits and paying back and owing payment and restoring a balance (see Freud's case of the *Rat Man*, 1909, Taylor, 1985, Hochschild, 1985 ). Oppenheimer refers to guilt as ' . . . a drubbing avalanche of indebtedness' (Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 9) Oppenheimer also points out that the 'debts' owed by the guilty were required to be paid not only by them but also by their families and descendants. He dates the codification of a change in this to the seventh century BC when the Athenian Law-giver, Solon, argued that the criminal alone should 'pay' (Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 55).

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<sup>4</sup> The German word for guilt – *Schuld* – is also the word for 'debt'

Recent stories from India of the bonding of family members suggests that the practice is continuing, with family members being bonded or enslaved in lieu of their forebear's debts.

Taylor provides 3 options for the guilty person:

- i. Firstly, he may make repayment as best he can and regard the matter as closed.
- ii. Secondly, perhaps not thinking the first solution within his reach, he may adjust himself to the alteration in himself by now continuing in a way consistent with it, by making the disfigurement [caused to his 'self' by his guilt] disappear by disfiguring himself still further.
- iii. Finally, he may just continue to suffer the guilt with possibly serious consequences to himself.

Taylor, 1985, p. 93

She suggests the first solution is the best, the second may lead to 'total wickedness' and the last to 'madness' (p. 94). She sees Macbeth as an example of the second and Lady Macbeth as an example of the third. One rather serious implication of her comments above is that there is no living with guilt. Unless it is 'paid for' it will have destructive consequences. This theme of debt and attempts to 'pay' will be addressed further.

### **Guilt as a psychological problem**

In 1872 Charles Darwin published his best-selling study of *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in which he argued that expressions were innate,

universal and evolved according to principles closely allied to biological processes. He conceded that he had trouble defining guilt (along with slyness and jealousy) (p.23) but nevertheless went on to say that:

The guilty man is said to avoid looking at his accuser, or to give him stolen looks. The eyes are said 'to be turned askant', or 'to waver from side to side', or 'the eyelids to be lowered and partly closed'. . . The restless movements of the eyes apparently follow . . . from the guilty man not enduring to meet the gaze of his accuser. I may add that I have observed a guilty expression, without a shade of fear, in some of my own children at a very early age. In one instance the expression was unmistakably clear in a child two years and seven months old, and led to the detection of his little crime. It was shown . . . by an unnatural brightness in the eyes, and by an odd, affected manner, impossible to describe.

Darwin, 1872, p. 261

In the most recent edition of Darwin's text, his champion and editor, Paul Ekman, describes the incident involving Darwin's son, Willy, by drawing on Darwin's notebook account of the incident. In this account Darwin notes 'acting and deceit' as playing a part in his son's behaviour. In the published text Darwin next discusses 'slyness' which seems to have similarities of expression to guilt. The idea of deceit implicated in guilt is one that we will consider further later. Darwin also makes a connection between fear and guilt in terms of their physiological manifestations (a dry mouth) (p. 291n) although in the quote above he specifies ' . . . a guilty expression, *without a shade of fear* . . .' (Darwin, 1872, p. 261 Emphasis added).

In a discussion of blushing, Darwin draws attention to blushing from ‘moral causes’.

He argues that:

It is not the sense of guilt, but the thought that others think or know us to be guilty which crimson the face.

Darwin, 1872, p. 331

This suggests that it is something more akin to shame that is at stake. He continues a little later:

Many a person has blushed intensely when accused of some crime, though completely innocent of it. Even the thought . . . that others think that we have made an unkind or stupid remark, is amply sufficient to cause a blush, although we know all the time that we have been completely misunderstood. An action may be meritorious or of an indifferent nature, but a sensitive person, if he suspects others take a different view of it, will blush.

Darwin, 1872, pp.331-2

Here Darwin makes clear that there is no inherent relation between the degree of ‘crime’ and the degree of ‘guilt’ associated with it. He pursues this point a stage further when he notes later in the same section that:

Breaches of conventional rules of conduct, if they are rigidly insisted upon by our equals or superiors, often cause more intense blushes even than a detected crime; and an act which is really criminal, if not blamed by our equals, hardly raises a tinge of colour on our cheeks.

Darwin, 1872, p. 343

Here, Darwin is acknowledging first that there is no direct connection between crime and guilt and secondly that social standards - 'conventional rules of conduct' and what counts as 'blame' by our 'equals' are implicated in the derivation of moral 'blushes'. Both of these ideas will be investigated later.

We should bear in mind that Darwin's purpose is to examine the *expression* of emotions and not emotions as feeling states, although he does often make reference to the feelings which he thinks are associated with particular expressions. We can also note in passing that his anthropological evidence, and especially his armchair method of gathering it, has been subject to considerable criticism. More recently, his claims about the universality of emotional expression have been subject to critique by cultural relativists such as Catherine Lutz (1982).

The view of emotions in modern evolutionary psychology is not much different to that put forward by Darwin (in some ways it seems less sophisticated), and is that they have evolved to help us survive in some way - so fear for example is designed to help us anticipate danger. The view of guilt derived from this perspective is that if we feel guilty, we will apologise or in some way make amends and that the guilt may encourage us to change our behaviour (Dalglish and Power, 1999). This is a rather superficial and functionalist idea of guilt and utterly fails to account for most people's professed experience of guilt. It is more like wishful thinking than a viable explanation.



Important psychological studies have been concerned with moral development (Piaget, 1932; Eysenck, 1960; Kohlberg, 1981; Gilligan, 1982) but not with guilt as such. Kohlberg published *The Philosophy of Moral Development* in 1981 in which he described a moral test given to a boy Jake and a girl Amy. Carol Gilligan, who worked with Kohlberg, reinterpreted his results and suggested that Amy personified a ‘different’ but equally viable moral stance. Gilligan’s work has formed the basis for a reinterpretation of moral issues along feminist lines and the development of an ‘ethics of care’ counter-posed to an ethics of justice.

### **Guilt as a Psychoanalytic Problem**

Psychoanalysis as theory and practice is concerned with unconscious processes. However, insights from psychoanalysis can also be used to explain and treat conscious experiences. Freud and many other psychoanalysts have had much to say on both conscious and unconscious guilt. This thesis will be concerned with manifestations of both conscious and unconscious guilt.

Why has psychoanalysis paid particular attention to guilt? There are several connected reasons. First, when patients attend for psychoanalysis, they very frequently complain of being over-burdened, distressed or even paralysed by feelings of guilt. Second, in the case of some patients, even where they do not complain of feeling guilty, their actions and behaviour indicate that they suffer from unconscious guilt. Third, psychoanalytic theory can be used to throw light on ‘normal’ psychological processes. Guilt is widely reported as being experienced by people whether or not they enter therapy. As such, it

constitutes a psychological problem of some significance. While psychoanalysis is not the only psychological perspective concerned with guilt, the primary concerns of psychoanalysis mean that it elevates its importance, compared to other psychologies.

Some of the developments in psychology have meant that the psychology of emotion or affect, under which rubrics guilt could be studied, have tended to take a back seat to other fields. For example, the behaviourist trend, dominant throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, explicitly avoided examination of subjective feeling-states. However, humanistic psychology does address questions of guilt. Some of the ideas about guilt in humanistic psychology are traceable to elements in Freudian theory, though they reject the implications of his ideas about the unconscious.

Psychoanalysis takes as its starting point, the speech of patients, the stories they tell of themselves and the way they tell them, their symptoms and the associations they have to them. As noted above, patients very frequently refer to experiences of guilt of which they are perfectly conscious. In addition, in the material that many other patients bring to analysis, it emerges that, although they are not consciously aware of feelings of guilt, they nevertheless engage in self-punishing behaviour (which in psychoanalytic theory is usually seen as indicative of unconscious guilt). Where this is analysed further, deep-rooted unconscious guilt-complexes are found. Guilt and a number of related concepts: need for punishment, self-reproach, guilt-feeling, sense of guilt and remorse, are included in Freud's work from the earliest developments of psychoanalysis. He revisits the problem of guilt repeatedly and extensively throughout the whole of the remainder

of his work. He sums up the importance of guilt in his work in a statement in 1930 when he says it is:

. . . my intention to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization

Freud, 1930, p. 327

Following him, most of the major theorists of psychoanalysis have contributed to debates about guilt including Melanie Klein, Ernest Jones and Jacques Lacan. Lacan argues that psychoanalysis has been important in recognising the widespread occurrence of guilt:

If there is, in fact, something that psychoanalysis has drawn attention to, it is . . . the importance, I would even say the omnipresence, of a sense of guilt.

Lacan, 1959-60, p.3

A little further on, he concurs with Freud about the centrality of guilt for psychoanalysis:

Psychoanalysis would seem to have as its sole goal the calming of guilt.

Lacan. 1959-60, p.4

Psychoanalysis has focussed on the occurrence of guilt in psychopathology and to a lesser extent in non-pathological experience (Freud, 1901). Psychoanalysts have been concerned with how to respond in practice to manifestations of conscious and

unconscious guilt in the clinical setting. In order to do this, they have developed a range of theories about the origin and causes of guilt and about the operation of guilt in the psychical apparatus. Psychoanalytic theories always rely on a conflict model in which some parts of the psyche are at odds with other parts. In most psychoanalytic theory, the interests of the ego and the super-ego are understood to be in conflict whenever guilt is manifested. However, different perspectives within psychoanalysis will theorise this relation in different ways and with different emphases. The problems of the origin and causes of guilt cause much more difficulty and there are marked differences between theorists (and *within* the work of some theorists) on how to understand them. This specific difficulty will form a main focus of the thesis.

Although guilt is a very substantial human problem, comparatively little theorisation of it exists. This is particularly the case for guilt as a psychological problem. The main academic theorisation of guilt that is available is in the field of psychoanalysis. It provides innovative theorisation and also, unlike most other psychologies, attempts to theorise the psychical mechanisms that operate in guilt and to provide theories of the origin and causes of guilt. Guilt, however, continues to be a very difficult problem for psychoanalysis both in theory and practice. This is exemplified in the wide range of explanatory causes put forward for guilt. It is also exemplified in the inability of these theories to account well for the prevalence of guilt, the persistence of guilt and the forms that it takes.

## **Guilt Phenomena and Cultural Representation**

The ubiquity of guilt, as an experienced affect, is widely attested. However the concept 'guilt' is variably defined, for example as both attribution of responsibility and subjective feeling state.

This thesis will be concerned with guilt as a psychological category. What do people mean when they say they experience guilt? Is guilt a subjective feeling state or can guilt be imputed to a subject by someone else? Why do some people seem to experience more guilt than others? Is there a 'healthy' or normative range of guilt? What happens if people do not feel guilt or feel too much guilt?

One fundamental psychological problem of guilt concerns the apparent lack of relation between wrongdoing and guilt. Some people seem to feel disproportionately large amounts of guilt even when it appears they are not guilty while others who appear to have every reason to be guilty for the pain and havoc that they cause seem to be immune from feelings of guilt.

Gabriele Taylor calls guilt, along with pride and shame 'emotions of self-assessment' (Taylor, 1985, p. 1). She too struggles to find an explanation of guilt where no rationally understood crime has taken place and settles on taboos (p. 86) and adds a little later that 'the person who feels guilty thinks in terms of duties not performed and obligations not fulfilled.' (p87). She continues by noting that 'Feelings of guilt are often evoked by the thought that one is wasting one's time or abilities.' (p.88). She

uses this observation to argue against the rather legalistic notion that guilt necessarily involves harm to others or a 'principle of right'.

Important representations of guilt in literature have contributed to cultural understandings of guilt. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Dostoyevsky's major writings and those of Franz Kafka and Nathaniel Hawthorne have been held up as exemplifying characters affected and sometimes tortured by guilt.

Carroll (1985) makes a distinction between dispositional guilt and moral guilt. Moral guilt is similar to the idea of legal guilt discussed above while dispositional guilt is similar to psychological guilt. In discussing *Hamlet* he says:

Hamlet is an outstanding example of dispositional guilt. He has committed no crime, he has breached no moral code, and yet he is paralysed by guilt.

Carroll, 1985, p. 11

Carroll goes on to suggest that Hamlet was acutely depressed. He argues that, in relation to his mother's fickleness, what he should feel is anger not guilt and that in relation to his father's murder he should feel rage and a desire for vengeance. He describes Hamlet's guilty reaction as 'irrational'. This raises an interesting question: why do people opt so readily for guilt when an objective view might suggest more appropriate emotional responses, for example, rage, sorrow or pity?

Alfred Hitchcock's film *Marnie* can be viewed as an example of art drawing its inspiration from ideas developed in the clinical field. The character Marnie, played by Tippi Hedren, engages in criminal acts and self-destructive behaviour as a consequence of repressed memories from childhood. Hitchcock, along with other film directors in the period following the Second World War, was much influenced by psychoanalytic ideas and in this film makes very explicit use of them. This is less an example of culture contributing to ideas on guilt as ideas on guilt, previously constructed, being portrayed in culture.

There are a number of important repeated themes that will be attended to in the course of succeeding chapters.

First of all the relation between guilt and fear. As was noted above, guilt is early associated with a terrifying deity, then with fears of retribution and legal redress. The psychological meaning of an association between guilt and fear is one that is rarely addressed, though an exception is Ernest Jones's *Fear, Guilt and Hate* (1929).

Second there is the repeated theme of debt, repayment and accounting. What are the economics of guilt and from whence does this idea originate. The earliest forms of payment for guilt resulted in an un-payable debt that continued in perpetuity falling upon descendants of the guilty party. Later a more straight-forward Talion principle is in operation - 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and later still, the idea that one could atone and make reparation by some other means. All of these ideas can be

found in modern accounts of guilt.

Third, the idea of causality and its relation to guilt needs to be examined. As noted above, where one God is responsible for everything, a kind of divine fatalism results. However, if human beings have some measure of responsibility and are included in the cause of things, then blame and guilt are changed.

There is also an issue of gender in guilt. Gilligan has posited a different kind of morality in women. Freud thought that women's super-egos were less robust than men's super-egos. It is also intriguing that the debate in psychoanalysis about guilt was contemporaneous with the better known debate on femininity and petered out at the same time. Many of the contributors to the debate on femininity were also those who contributed to the debate on guilt and a particular theme that bridged the two was the debate on the feminine superego and its relation to castration. This suggests that there might be good reason to look at psychoanalytic discussion of sexual difference in trying to investigate guilt.

All of these themes will be dealt with in a general question that will look at why people opt for guilt at all.

Overall the question to be addressed in the thesis concerns the efficacy of psychoanalytic accounts of guilt. Themes and problems concerning guilt identified in this chapter and in the work of each of the theorists are used to provide an analytic



framework for assessing the viability and robustness of available accounts of guilt.

The main themes addressed are guilt's relation to fear, anxiety and affect in general, the idea of debt as linked to guilt, guilt as related to responsibility and causality and the relation between guilt and sexual difference. Each of these themes is examined through the work of the four main theorists though the emphasis in each of the theorist's work varies. For example, the main focus in Jones work is on the relations between guilt, fear and anxiety while in Lacan the question of debt is more central.

The effort to examine these main themes through the work of each of the theorists requires consideration of a number of issues specific to the different theoretical edifice of each of them. In Freud's case, and because he was the originator of the field, several components of his oeuvre that are key to specifying his developing theory of guilt are considered. For example, it is not possible to engage with Freud on guilt without considering concepts like the unconscious, repression, the ego, ideals, the super-ego, drives, repetition and neurosis. I argue further that affect, the voice, civilisation (culture) and sexual difference must also be considered.

The other theorists use Freud's terminology but it is important to clarify to what extent they concur with Freud in its usage and to what extent they re-invent the terms in their own theoretical work. Each of them also produces their own concepts relevant to the question of guilt and the thesis therefore engages with concepts and issues that are specific to or emphasised by each of them. In the case of Jones, for example,

frustration, privation and aphanisis, in Klein, for example, aggression, splitting and envy and in the case of Lacan, for example, the signifier, the Other, desire and *Jouissance*.

The purpose of the research is to examine, assess and evaluate the work of psychoanalysts in attempting to theorise a fundamentally important social, cultural and psychical problem – that of guilt. A further purpose is to show how that theoretical work can be advanced in the future by using theoretical formulations put forward by Lacan and, in particular, by building upon and extending his work to theorise the production of guilt in subjectivisation and the relation between guilt and love – a concept associated with guilt, although usually tangentially, in the work of all the theorists.

### **The research.**

A diverse body of psychoanalytic work on guilt is available though none seems able to account reasonably fully for clinical and everyday guilt-related phenomena. Psychoanalytic accounts of guilt do appear to be able to offer some useful insights into some of the phenomena of guilt found in clinical practice and to be able to offer a basis for analyses of guilt-related phenomena common in everyday life. The research will be concerned with the following question: How well can psychoanalytic theories account for a range of clinical and everyday guilt-related phenomena?

The specific aims of the research are:

To research and analyse psychoanalytic theories of guilt.

To chart previously uncharted theoretical developments in the field of psychoanalysis.

To evaluate the extent to which extant theories sufficiently account for guilt and where they do not, to propose and argue the case for alternatives.

The thesis is structured in the following way:

Chapter 1. Introduction to the thesis and overview of guilt.

Chapter 2. Freud and Guilt

Chapter 3. Freud's Followers: Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein

Chapter 4. Lacan on Guilt

Chapter 5. Analysis

Chapter 6. Findings and conclusions

Chapter 1 Introduction to the thesis and overview of guilt.

The purposes of this chapter are to show: the diversity of conceptualisations of guilt and the specificity of the conceptions of guilt which the remainder of the thesis will deal with; the ubiquity of guilt as a cultural phenomenon; which theorists of guilt will be focussed on and why; how the thesis is organised; and the focal issues of the thesis and the central questions it addresses

Chapter 2 Freud and Guilt

Freud had posited a theory of guilt as consequent upon the phylogenetic memory of the

murder of the primal father activated in the Oedipus and castration complexes. This is the argument first formulated in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13) and subsequently re-formulated in the elaboration of the development of the super-ego. Guilt is also early considered to be the special forte of the obsessional neurotic who responds to a premature surplus of sexual feeling with guilt, distinguishing him from the hysteric who responds with revulsion.

A second theory of guilt links it to the death drive and primary masochism. Having initially accepted the idea of a primary sadism, subsequently turned round to produce a reactive masochism, Freud, from 1924, argues for a primary psychic masochism. In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937) this is elaborated as the cause of an enjoyment in suffering on which psychoanalytic therapy is likely to founder. The unconscious sense of guilt may be bolstered by a secondary masochism; sadism projected outwards and subsequently introjected, but the primary source of the unconscious sense of guilt is a primary masochism, identical with the death drive and manifested in a search for suffering (Freud, 1924). Major consideration will be given to Freud's late but extensive examination of guilt in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930).

The purposes of this chapter are to: argue that Freud introduced important and radically new ways of thinking about guilt; show how Freud's ideas on guilt change over the course of his work and analyse and evaluate Freud's ideas on guilt.

The chapter proceeds via a detailed examination of a wide range of Freud's work to specify the way in which guilt is understood. There are three main types of 'guilt' examined in Freud's work. They are:

conscious feelings of remorse and self-reproach for commission or omission of an action or thought;

a more general feeling of malaise apparently not attached to an act/thought and;

unconscious guilt-complexes which are postulated to account for acts of self-punishment.

Within Freud's oeuvre there are several formulations of guilt, spanning the whole of his development of psychoanalysis. Early formulations link guilt to sexual desire and masturbation (1895), then to parricidal wishes (1912-13). Later formulations link guilt to trends associated with the death drive (1930). A central question of Freud's work on guilt concerns the distinction between conscious and unconscious guilt. Throughout his work Freud considers guilt in relation to a range of important concepts (remorse, censorship, the super-ego, masochism and 'need for punishment') employed in different places and in different ways. The chapter analyses the place of guilt in Freud's work and identifies impasses, strengths, inconsistencies, and themes. It establishes what Freud's questions about guilt were, how he tried to address them, what answers he

provided and how and why.

### Chapter 3 Freud's Followers: Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein

In the nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties there was extensive debate, among psychoanalytic thinkers, on the question of guilt. So much, in fact, that in 1932 Freud could state:

The problems which the unconscious sense of guilt has opened up, its connections with morality, education, crime and delinquency, are at present the preferred field of work for psychoanalysts.

Freud, 1933 [1932], p.110

At this time a number of factors combined to fuel this debate. Some of the significant factors were: Freud's positing of the 'death drive' in 1920 and the 'super-ego' in 1923; the increasing interest in child analysis and the disputes between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud about it; the discussions around femininity and in particular the question of the feminine super-ego fuelled by Freud's change of view on this in the mid-twenties. Contributors to these debates included many of the important names in the first and second generation of psychoanalytic theorising, for example: Franz Alexander (1929), Edmund Bergler (1936), Otto Fenichel (1928), Karen Horney (1937), Ernest Jones (1929), Melanie Klein (1926, 1927), Herbert Nunberg (1926), Theodor Reik (1924) and Joan Rivière (1927). This debate died out in the thirties, along with the related but more famous debate on feminine sexuality. This was, at least in part, a consequence of the forced exile of the predominantly Jewish psychoanalytic movement in Europe and the

related suppression of psychoanalysis, both a feature of rising Nazism. Few significant publications on guilt are in evidence in the early post-war period. Rudolf Löwenstein's "A Special Form of Self-Punishment" (1945) and Melanie Klein's "On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt" (1948) are noteworthy exceptions.

Melanie Klein's theory of guilt is linked to her theory of the death instinct and is essentially that guilt results from the phantasised attacks on the object made by the infant that the infant imagines will be visited on him in return in the form of persecution.

The feeling that the harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses I take to be the essence of guilt . . . The urge to undo or repair this harm results from the feeling that the subject has caused it, i.e. from guilt.

Klein, 1948, p.36

This theory has been very influential and is employed widely in British psychoanalysis.

The purposes of this chapter are to: chart the development of ideas focussing on Klein and Jones; analyse the key points of agreement and disagreement between these thinkers and between them and Freud.

The chapter deals extensively with the theories of Melanie Klein, Ernest Jones and makes some reference to other contributors.

## Chapter 4      Lacan and Guilt

Jacques Lacan, produced a number of new psychoanalytic formulations on the question of guilt. Two distinct, and apparently contradictory, lines of thought on guilt are discernible in his work between the late fifties and late sixties. Lacan's statements about guilt build on Freud's theory of the death-drive and psychic masochism. He famously states in the Ethics seminar (1959/60) that guilt results from ' . . . not conforming to your desire . . . ', and that guilt is produced out of the energy of desire itself. Later Lacan suggests that the neurotic tends towards a *jouissance* in relation to which guilt is a kind of necessary by-product. This later formulation seems to suggest that it is desire itself, in inhibiting drive satisfaction, which produces guilt. (Lacan, 1964) Further elaboration of Lacan's theory has been undertaken by Michel Silvestre. He, in line with Lacan's later theorising, emphasises the difficulties which remain if the argument is centred on the child's parricidal impulses. The crucial transgression for him concerns the primordial object of *jouissance* - the mother. However he goes further in elaborating the subject's problematic claim to *jouissance* in the form of the *objet a* - a residue of enjoyment which must be wrung out of the Other, the Ur-form of which is the breast. This residue is redeemable only at a price.

Silvestre makes reference also to Freud's pessimism about the human condition, especially that expressed in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930). It is from this that Lacan and subsequently Joan Copjec (1996) derive via Kant (and for Lacan, from de Sade too) an idea of a radical evil in contradistinction to which human culture tries (somewhat vainly) to constitute itself.



Lacan's later ideas in his seminar XX 'Encore' will be used to try to advance the discussion on guilt.

The purposes of this chapter will be to: chart the main developments in Lacan's thinking on guilt; show how Lacan responds to some of the impasses in Freud's thinking and to show how Silvestre's contribution helps with the question of guilt.

## Chapter 5      Analysis

In this chapter we bring together the ideas of the main theorists and try to consider them in relation to a number of guilt-related themes. These themes have been developed through the overview in chapter 1 and the examination of the theorists work in Chapters two, three and four. They correspond to the wider questions of the thesis but allow us to approach those questions in manageable portions. The themes that are considered are self-reproach, sense of guilt and need for punishment; fear and anxiety; aggression and death drive; privation, frustration, castration and loss; the voice, affect; religion and love. In addition, reference is made to some of the case material that underpins the theorists' work, most notably Freud's case of the Rat Man whose guilt torment is widely known.

The purposes of this chapter will be to: make a detailed examination of the theories under specific themes; continuously relate the themes back to the general question of guilt and consider the viability of theory including in relation to case material.

The main cases which will be examined are:

Freud's case of the Rat Man (1909). Guilt is discussed in all of Freud's six major case-studies but the case known as 'The Rat Man' is the case in which Freud deals most extensively with the issue. The 'Rat Man' suffers from both conscious guilt and, Freud argues, unconscious guilt so that issues associated with the difference between the two can also be addressed by looking at this case.

Melanie Klein's case of 'Rita' (1926, 1945, 1955). Again, although Klein discusses guilt in relation to most of her many published cases, the case of 'Rita' is the one where she a) formulates her first ideas about guilt and b) repeatedly returns when she discusses new developments in her thinking about guilt. As in the case of Freud's 'Rat Man' there are manifestations of both conscious and unconscious guilt in the 'Rita' case allowing for further examination of this problem.

## Chapter 6 Findings and conclusions

In the final chapter we draw together the analysis so far under three main headings. We first consider guilt from the point of view of commandments. Secondly we return to the incessant problem of the severity and harshness of the sense of guilt and try to account for it. In the third section we use Lacan's idea of the law of desire and the importance of the signifier to show how the subject is constituted in relation to guilt. Here we make a number of theoretical claims that draw on Lacan's new formulations in his seminar XX to show how guilt arises and what is responsible for producing it. This new thesis

derives from Lacan's ideas about the *ex nihilo* creation of the signifier that subjectivises human beings as sexed subjects and in the process also creates a beyond dimension that functions to both attract and repel the subject. It is in this foundational fault that we find the place of origin of guilt rather than, as previously theorised, in some inherent quality of human beings.

As noted earlier, guilt is a very widespread condition affecting very substantial numbers of people entering therapy and apparently affecting many others who do not enter therapy. At the moment, when confronted by a patient suffering under the weight of guilt, the analyst's main response, from Freud to the present day, is to try to determine what the patient is 'really' guilty of. As discussed earlier, different theorists have divergent ideas about what patients are likely 'really' guilty of - but they mostly do not differ in presuming that patients are 'really' guilty of something. It is the argument of this thesis that that line of enquiry is at best a waste of time and effort and, at worst, a collusion with a fundamentally pathological trend in the patient. The lesson for practice would seem to be that when confronted with guilt in a patient, the analyst needs more to consider what the option of claiming guilt allows the patient to escape from or avoid. This would therefore require, at the very least, a re-orientation of the analyst's thinking about the case that in turn would inform the strategy the analyst would adopt. However, given that guilt is such a widespread feature of widely different analyses, the implications are equally wide. It may also be that these effects could be felt farther afield in the wider counselling and therapeutic world as some of the ideas on guilt in those fields are derived from and informed by psychoanalytic ones.

The thesis sets out to question in detail a core problem of psychoanalytic theory. In doing so, it puts in question some widely and deeply held ideas. It is worth adding, from the point of view of locating this work, that it extends rather than disproves psychoanalytic theory. The logic drawn upon to develop the new theory derives significantly from the logic employed by Freud in his theory of ‘false connections’ in his work on hysterical psychopathology. The theory also relies upon Kleinian and Lacanian observations on early childhood and on Lacanian formulations of psychical structure, the construction of subjectivity by the signifier, the generation of sexual difference in that subjectivisation and the ‘fault’ that emerges in that construction.

## Chapter 2

### Freud and Guilt

This chapter will review the developments and changes in Freud's conceptualisations of guilt.

Freud's ideas on guilt encompass the use of a number of closely related terms and it will be part of the project undertaken here to examine and clarify his use of them. Throughout this chapter, and in other parts of this thesis, we will work with the following terms: *guilt, sense of guilt, guilt feeling, remorse, need for punishment and self-reproach*. These terms are, of course, the English translation of the German terms that Freud used. A discussion of the German terms and issues associated with their translation will be found in Appendix X.

Freud's earliest work on guilt is on the recurrent clinical problem of self-reproaches *Selbstvorwurf*<sup>1</sup>. There are numerous references to 'self-reproach' in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) written jointly with Josef Breuer. It is of some interest that the problem of guilt appears first in a book about hysteria and not the other great neurosis he counter-posed to it - obsessional neurosis. Freud was shortly afterwards (1896) to argue that 'self-reproach' was the defining 'defence' of obsessional neurosis and guilt continued to be closely associated

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<sup>1</sup> A footnote is added here by the editors of the Standard Edition: [Simply '*Vorwurf*' ('reproach') in the original. Both here and in his published writings this was Freud's habitual usage. Only very occasionally, and with no apparent change in meaning he writes '*Selbstvorwurf*' ('self-reproach') – e.g. p.233 below.]. See discussion on translation in Appendix X.

with obsessional neurosis throughout Freud's work. A comparison of self-reproach in hysteria and self-reproach in obsessional neurosis will therefore form an important strand in later analysis. First, we will look at the place of self-reproach in the *Studies on Hysteria*.

The first reference to self-reproach in the *Studies on Hysteria*, belongs not to Freud but to Breuer in his famed study of Bertha Pappenheim - *Anna O*. Breuer is discussing what Bertha herself characterises as her two different states and, in particular, what relationship seems to exist between the two states:

Nevertheless, though her two states were thus sharply separated, not only did the secondary state intrude into the first one, but - and this was at all events true, and even when she was in a very bad condition - a clear-sighted and calm observer sat, as she put it, in a corner of her brain and looked on at all the mad business. This persistence of clear thinking while the psychosis was actually going on found expression in a very curious way. At a time when, after the hysterical phenomena had ceased, the patient was passing through a temporary depression, she brought up a number of childish fears and self-reproaches, and among them the idea that she had not been ill at all and that the whole business had been simulated

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 46

Breuer adds to this the comment that he has found that in the case of other hysterics also that

. . . they think they could have prevented it (the nonsense) if they had wanted to, and thus they feel as though they had done all the mischief deliberately.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 46

There are a number of points worth remarking on here. First there is the ‘. . . clear-sighted and calm observer sat . . . in a corner of her brain [which] looked on at all the mad business’. We will see that this idea of a knowing/seeing agency that observes the ‘mad’ behaviour in a detached way has similarities to the agency of the super-ego developed twenty years later by Freud and also to ideas about paranoia discussed in his 1914 study of narcissism.

Secondly we can note that the self-reproaches are combined with childish fears - I will ask later what the relationship between fear and guilt might be - a relationship which Ernest Jones explored in depth in his important paper from 1929 entitled *Fear, Guilt and Hate*.

Third, we have a reference to simulation, often seen as a hallmark of hysteria. And related to this is the comment made by Breuer which links with a commonly held view of hysteria i.e. that it is a preventable put-on show entirely under the control of the sufferer.

The next important reference to self-reproach in the *Studies on Hysteria* occurs in the case of Emmy von N, provided by Freud.

I have more than once had occasion to notice during these last few days how hard she is on herself, how liable she is to blame herself severely for the least signs of neglect – if the towels for the massage are not in their usual place or if the newspaper for me to read when she is asleep is not instantly ready to hand. After the removal of the first and most superficial layer of tormenting recollections, her morally over-sensitive personality, with its tendency to self-deprecation, has come into view.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 65

Freud goes on to describe how he tries to reason with Emmy von N. over this tendency to self-blame but admits that he probably fails:

She did not take in my lesson, I fancy, any more than would an ascetic medieval monk, who sees the finger of God or a temptation of the Devil in every trivial event of his life and who is incapable of picturing the world even for a brief moment or in its smallest corner as being without reference to himself.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, pp. 65-6

We need to make two points here. First, that the tendency to self-deprecation and self-blame is a commonly observed trait in women (cf. Dryden, 1999). Second that the comparison with the monk yields an important theoretical issue i.e. the tendency to refer everything to oneself. We will return to this issue later but for the moment we should note that this might point us to the structure of paranoia as a source of further enquiry.

A few pages later (p. 67n) Freud begins an extremely long footnote that raises the issue of ‘false connections’ to account for the fabricated explanations given by neurotics and post-hypnotics to account for their otherwise inexplicable behaviour. Freud notes that the phenomenon of false connection has two components; mistrust and a lack in knowledge or a wish not to know something about a cause ‘for which they themselves are to blame’ (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 68n). An inability to consciously accept blame then seems to be intricately interwoven with the setting up of a false connection and would seem to furnish



some theoretical ground for the existence of unconscious guilt. Freud returns to the theoretical problem later in this text and we will pick it up again in our analytic discussion in chapter 5.

In this same footnote, Freud discusses Cäcilie M. whose case also exhibits this tendency to false connection and specifically a tendency to make a breach between the affect associated with an experience and its ideational content. He notes that she engaged in conscious self-reproaches, linked, following hypnosis, to a memory from twelve years earlier when she had reproached herself severely and characterised her hysteria as one involving the ‘payment of old debts’ (Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 69 n). We will find that the issue of debt is one that emerges frequently in the discussion of guilt and will examine it more fully in relation to the case of the ‘Rat Man’ (1909).

A little later but still discussing Emmy von N., who had seen her daughter suffer medical mistreatment, Freud remarks:

Her mother [Emmy von N], who had handed the girl over to the doctors with her usual mixture of docility and mistrust, was overcome by the most violent self-reproaches after the unfortunate outcome of the treatment.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 77

We should note in passing the odd combination of ‘docility’ and ‘mistrust’. Psychologically speaking one would expect to find trust rather than mistrust linked with docility so this combination presents us with conflicted ideas prior to the ‘unfortunate outcome of the [daughter’s] treatment’. We need to enquire here if the ‘docility and mistrust’ are in some way linked to the self-reproaches and also what the significance of this sequence of events is.

The problem of self-reproach occurs again in the case of Fraulein Elisabeth von R. Freud had described the conflict in her between a ‘circle of ideas’ of an erotic kind and her moral ideas, that is her moral repugnance about her erotic feelings for her brother in law (pp. 164-5). Freud shows how the circle of moral ideas comes into conflict with her erotic inclinations and also how those relate to the production of hysterical symptoms.

While she was nursing her father, as we have seen, she for the first time developed a hysterical symptom - a pain in a particular area of her right thigh. It was possible by means of analysis to find an adequate elucidation of the mechanism of the symptom. It happened when the circle of ideas embracing her duties to her sick father came into conflict with the content of the erotic desire she was feeling at the time. Under the pressure of lively self-reproaches she decided in favour of the former, and in doing so brought about her hysterical pain.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 164

Of particular interest here is the first statement by Freud of a fundamental thesis about guilt. The ideas circling duty are opposed to the ideas circling desire. Lively self-reproaches lead her to choose duty but the further result of that choice is illness. Here then is a first indication

that guilt, at least in the hysteric, works in opposition to desire. Guilt leads here to a renunciation of desire. This idea needs to be looked at in some depth as it appears to come into conflict with an important idea we will look at later in which the renunciation of desire is itself argued to be the source of guilt.

Freud goes on to discuss the occurrence of self-reproaches in the case of Cäcilie M. who is considered within the case study of Elisabeth von R. Freud uses the example from Cäcilie M. to try to understand Elizabeth's attacks of facial neuralgia. He says of Cäcilie.

. . . ultimately we were able to make our way back to her first attack of neuralgia, more than fifteen years earlier. Here there was no symbolisation but a conversion through simultaneity. She saw a painful sight which was accompanied by feelings of self-reproach, and this led her to force back another set of thoughts, thus it was a case of conflict and defence.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, pp. 178-9

Before going on to discuss the references to self-reproach in the theoretical and psychotherapy sections that follow the case-studies in this text, I will pause briefly to comment on the points raised above.

Self-reproach plays an important role in each of the three cases but there are significant differences in the ways in which it seems to figure. In the case of Anna O, the self-reproaches occur during a temporary depression, following her hysterical attacks, although a watching

agency is evident during the ‘attack’. With Emmy von N her conscious self-reproaches seem to be part of her transference relation to Freud<sup>2</sup>. For Cécilie M. we are not provided with the motive for her self-reproaches but we can note that the displacement of the affect associated with them results in an outbreak of self-deprecation twelve years later. In the case of Elisabeth von R, self-reproach seems to be unconscious and is intimately connected to symptom-formation. More detailed examination of these examples will be undertaken in the analysis in chapter five.

As might be expected, Breuer’s first comment on self-reproach (p. 228) in his theoretical section confirms and corroborates the *Anna O* example discussed above. Later he elaborates on the hysteric’s ‘need for being ill’ and comments on a case where a patient secretly ‘inflicted on herself injuries’ (p.243). Another patient is described who

. . . felt every hysterical phenomenon as something guilty, because, she said, she need not have had it if she really wanted not to. When a paresis of her legs was wrongly diagnosed as a disease of the spine she felt it as an immense relief, and when she was told that it was ‘only nervous’ and would pass off, that was enough to bring on severe pangs of conscience.

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 243

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<sup>2</sup> Although Freud had ideas about transference by this time he did not begin to develop a full-blown thesis about it until working with another hysterical patient, ‘Dora’ [Ida Bauer] some years later.

While conscience and guilt are explicitly referred to here I want also to note the references to a ‘need for being ill’ and self-injury as I will want to discuss their relation to the ‘need for punishment’ found repeatedly in psychoanalytic literature on guilt.

In his discussion of the *Psychotherapy of Hysteria* Freud introduces his early idea that hysterical symptoms are generated through ‘censorship’ of ‘incompatible ideas’ that subsequently become ‘pathogenic’. He says of these ideas:

. . . I recognised a universal characteristic of such ideas: they were all of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed. . .

Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 269

I noted above how, for Breuer, *Anna O* and other hysterical patients, experienced conscious guilt *after* hysterical episodes. Here, Freud is emphasising the role of self-reproach and related affects in the generation of hysterical symptoms. At this point in his work, these affects are subsumed under the general heading of an ‘aversion on the part of the ego’ which succeeds in repressing what have become, as a result of this aversion, ‘distressing’ ideas. The sequence of events is that the patient registers an ‘impulse’ or ‘idea’. The ‘idea’ meets with an ‘aversion’ (composed of affects such as self-reproach) the force of which succeeds in repressing it. What we need to look at in greater depth is the origin and features of this ‘aversion’ that exists, it would seem, prior to the occurrence of the ‘impulse’ or ‘idea’. It should be noted that Freud locates this ‘aversion’ in the ego. This point will be picked up

again when I discuss the various ideas on the mechanisms of guilt and the structural location of agents or agencies which contribute to guilt.

The examples we have looked at so far provide us with rich material from which to garner many observations about self reproaches. For the moment we could summarise as follows:

Freud and Breuer suggest the following behaviours lead to self-reproaches

<b>Breuer</b>	<b>Freud</b>
'mad business'	Neglect (of Freud)
simulation	Neglect of daughter
nonsense	Mixed docility and mistrust
mischief	Duty to sick father vs. erotic desire
	Seeing a painful sight

And that self-reproaching or guilty behaviour is manifest in the following ways

<b>Breuer</b>	<b>Freud</b>
Two states	Being hard on herself
An observing agency	Blaming herself severely
Childish fears	A morally over-sensitive personality
Simulation	Self-deprecation
Need for being ill	Violent self-reproaches
Self inflicted injuries	References to herself
	Lively self reproaches
	Feelings of self reproach

The difference in Breuer's and Freud's theoretical stance at this time can be summed up as follows:

Breuer sees self-reproaches as the patient's response to her hysterical illness. The self reproaches are the patient's guilt for engaging in and thereby inconveniencing others with, her unnecessary, invented and, by implication, self-indulgent, illness.

Freud's stance at this time is that the patient is trying to accommodate ideas that will not easily cohabit. One set of ideas is offensive to the ego and so the ego both tries to censor the idea and induces guilt in the subject who has wanted to entertain the offensive idea.

What is the difference between the 'self-reproaches' which litter the *Studies in Hysteria* and the 'self-reproaches' which Freud claims as a centrepiece of Obsessional Neurosis?

In 1896 in *Draft K - The Neuroses of Defence* (Extracts from the Fliess Papers - enclosed in Letter 39b of January 1 1896) Freud is trying to deal with the differential aetiology of the neuroses. He begins by distinguishing 4 types of defence:

They are pathological aberrations of normal psychical affective states: of *conflict* (hysteria), of *self-reproach* (obsessional neurosis), of *mortification* (paranoia), of *mourning* (acute hallucinatory amentia).

Freud, 1950 [1896], p. 220

Freud continues by discussing the general mechanisms that he thinks operate in the 'neuroses of repression' and suggests the following process: trauma<sup>3</sup> → repression → defence/symptom →

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<sup>3</sup> At this time Freud is considering 'real' trauma as opposed to psychical trauma which he foregrounds later. While this is an important issue in other discussions, it is of no immediate relevance here.



return of repressed. He then goes on to discuss aspects of this process that he thinks are specific to Obsessional neurosis

When this [sexual] experience is remembered later, it gives rise to a release of unpleasure; and, in particular, there first emerges a self-reproach, which is conscious. It seems, indeed, as though the whole psychical complex - memory and self-reproach - is conscious to start with. Later, both of them, without anything fresh supervening, are repressed and in their place an *antithetic symptom*, some nuance of *conscientiousness*, is formed in consciousness.

Freud, 1950 [1896] p. 223 Emphasis in original.

Crucial for Freud is the question of ‘passivity’:

In *all* my cases of obsessional neurosis, at a very early age, years before the experience of pleasure, there had been a *purely passive* experience . . .<sup>4</sup>

Freud, 1950 [1896] p. 223 Emphasis in original.

We need to note this issue of passivity and include it in our later analysis. We can also note that conscientiousness is held up as antithetical in some way to the self-reproaching behaviour (or perhaps more correctly, to what lies behind the self-reproach). This reactive conscientiousness

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<sup>4</sup> A footnote added by the editors to the Standard Edition states ‘The distinction between a passive aetiology for hysteria and an active one for obsessional neurosis, held by Freud at this time, was given up by him soon afterwards.’ 1950 [1896] p.223-4n

along with other protective measures and superstitions may help us to understand more about guilt.

In a passage shortly after Freud links self-reproach quite explicitly to guilt.

At the stage of the return of the repressed, it turns out that the *self-reproach* returns unaltered, but rarely in such a way as to draw attention to itself; for a while, therefore, it emerges as a pure sense of guilt without any content.

Freud, 1950 [1896] p. 224 Italics in original.

I will return to this question of a ‘pure sense of guilt without any content’. It is a curious phrase begging questions about how one identifies a ‘sense of guilt’ if it has no content. As we will see, this odd formulation may tell us more than it first suggests.

Freud goes on to enumerate the various transformations which the affect of the self-reproach may undergo.

The affect of the self-reproach may be transformed by various psychical processes into other affects, which then enter consciousness more clearly than the affect itself: for instance, into *anxiety* (fear of the consequences of the action to which the self-reproach applies), *hypochondria* (fear of its bodily effects), *delusions of persecution* (fear of its social effects), *shame* (fear of other people knowing about it), and so on.

Freud, 1950 [1896] p. 224 Italics in the original.

Freud concludes this discussion of the specific features of obsessional neurosis with the following decisive statement.

Obsessional neurotics are people who are subject to the danger that eventually the whole of the sexual tension generated in them daily may turn into self-reproach or rather into the symptoms resulting from it, although at the present time they would not recognise the primary self-reproach afresh.

Obsessional neurosis can be cured if we undo all the substitutions and affective transformations that have taken place, till the primary self-reproach and the experience belonging to it can be laid bare and placed before the conscious ego for judging anew.

Freud, 1950 [1896] pp. 225-6

It is evident from this early work of Freud's that self-reproach plays a crucial role in the neuroses and that the 'cure' of obsessional neurosis, at least, relies upon its analysis.

We need here to summarise Freud's early formulations on guilt (in the form of self-reproach) in these investigations into hysteria and obsessional neurosis. Freud is acknowledging that patients construct conceptual sequences in which some ideas are counter-posed by others. This counter-posing involves an action of judgement upon a piece of behaviour, real or wished for. The counter-posing idea is critical and punishing and sets up a conflict in the mind of the patient.

‘Guilt’ is remarkably absent in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). This should not surprise us because the emphasis in this text that really introduces unconscious life is upon desire, and for Freud, guilt and desire are antithetical. However, Freud does provide a theoretical discussion on affects in dreams, which is pertinent to the examination of guilt. He says:

In the case of a psychical complex which has come under the influence of the censorship imposed by resistance, the *affects* are the constituent which is least influenced and which alone can give us a pointer as to how we should fill in the missing thoughts.

Freud, 1900, p. 461

This sentence allows us to question what seems to be something of a paradox. The censorship which Freud is concerned with derives from affects - revulsion, disgust, shame etc. - but the censorship is censorship of a psychical complex of which affects (self-reproach is specifically mentioned later in the same paragraph) are a constituent. Affects seem to be acting for the defence and the prosecution. This apparent paradox will need to be examined in the case of guilt.

However, the main point of Freud’s argument is to demonstrate that affects and ideas are not bound together and crucially for Freud, that particular affects found in dreams or neuroses are ‘justified’ by the psychopathology of the dreamer or the neurotic whereas the shifting and disguised ideational content is ‘repressed and replaced by a substitute’ (1900, p. 461). This would seem to suggest that the affect can be relied upon or has some ‘truth’ in it. This important issue with far-reaching theoretical implications will be addressed in the later analysis.

The issue of guilt is frequently linked to manifestations of what is called by Freud ‘a need for punishment’ or, in more popular parlance today - ‘self-punishing behaviour’. In the dream book, Freud identifies what he calls ‘punishment dreams’. We need to examine this particular class of self-punishing activity and enquire into its relation to the structure and functioning of guilt.

In his discussion of secondary revision, Freud notes,

What Silberer’s observations have added to this is the fact that in certain circumstances a species of self-observation plays a part in this and makes a contribution to the content of the dream. The probable relations of this self-observing agency, which may be particularly prominent in philosophical minds, to endopsychic perception, to delusions of observation, to conscience and to the censor of dreams can be more appropriately treated elsewhere.

Freud, 1900, pp.505-6

Freud added a footnote to this comment directing the reader to his 1914 paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction*. Here, again, we have the self-observing agency in Freud’s work and its importance for guilt. It will form a key thread of investigation below.

From these beginnings Freud embarks on a career of clinical examination and intellectual exploration. In the course of his subsequent career, guilt remains as one of the key concepts and makes an appearance in all of his subsequent case studies and much of his subsequent theoretical

writing. We cannot here, reproduce every instance of this so what follows will be necessarily selective. However, what we aim to do is to provide a representative examination of the key issues associated with guilt. We begin with a schematic outline of the place of guilt in the main case studies and clinical work. We then turn our attention to Freud's varied attempts to theorise guilt. This we will do by isolating the key themes in his theorisation and discussing them in turn. The key themes that will be addressed are:

Aversion, defence, conflict, censorship and repression.

The ego

A seeing/observing agency

Ideal Ego, Ego Ideal and Super Ego

Self-punishment, masochism and the death drive

The voice

Affect

Civilisation and neurosis

Before going into this themed discussion of the theorisation of guilt we need to consider the manifestations of guilt in Freud's clinic.

## Guilt in Freud's Cases

Here we will provide a schematic outline of the incidence of guilt in Freud's published clinical work.

As we have seen it is self-reproach that figures significantly in his early discussions of hysteria and obsessional neurosis. This continues into the 'Dora' and 'Rat Man' cases, published respectively as *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905) and *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* (1909).

In the 'Dora' case Freud discusses the violent reproaches that Dora heaps on those around her (principally, her father) and argues that these are, in fact, self-reproaches turned around and projected outwards. He compares this with the process of forming a delusion in paranoia but acknowledges that Dora is herself aware, sometimes, that her other-directed reproaches are unjustified. (Freud, 1905, p. 35).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> One of the odd things about the Dora case and one that has a bearing on the question of guilt is the extent of Freud's defence of his publication of the case in the 'Prefatory Remarks'. In many of his publications Freud discusses problems with publication - issues of delicacy or confidentiality, for example. The pages of defence here, where he anticipates blame and reproach, appear over-strenuous, as if he 'doth protest too much', as if he is deeply uneasy about the publication (delayed since 1901). This may in part be accounted for by the particular issues in publishing this case but they are no more scandalous than his *Three Essays* published the same year. They might better be accounted for by a residuum from Freud's relation to the patient and the case which has been much commented upon.

Freud's analysis of 'Dora' was cut short by her exit after only three months, arguably as a punishment for Freud. It would be reasonable to suggest that the 'sense of guilt' in 'Dora's' case, was, and remained, largely unconscious.

In 1909, Freud published his only analysis of a child entitled *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy*.

The key feature of this case concerns the child's efforts to deal with his anxiety occasioned by the prohibitions against sexual ownership of his mother and masturbation. Hans' fear of biting and falling horses (the phobia) represented a fear of punishment from his father for his malevolent wishes against him. We might consider that the relatively early stage of Hans' development meant that he was dealing with the anxiety posed by external threats that pre-date the proper internalisation of the super-ego. Alternatively we might consider, along with Freud, that the relative kindness and consideration of his enlightened and loving parents may have contributed to his open expression of his anxiety:

With him there was no place for such motives as a bad conscience or a fear of punishment, which with other children must no doubt contribute to making the anxiety less.

Freud, 1909, p. 143



Freud follows this comment with a discussion of childrearing options and suggests that Hans' phobia, in bringing his father to his assistance, may result in him faring better than other children. This might suggest that we ought to pay more attention to the actual style of communication of parents in their education of their children as part of our investigation into guilt.

It is in the Rat Man case that guilt and the need for punishment are most evident. This case of obsessional neurosis has punishment as a central theme. The Rat Man comes to Freud with a long history of obsessions and fears. It transpires that the fears are linked to wishes which the Rat Man cannot acknowledge and that the obsessive actions are protections against his acting out his repressed wishes. In the Rat Man's case, he is reproaching himself, accusing himself of criminality and feeling a sense of guilt but he does not know what his guilt is about. In his case the ideational content related to the sense of guilt has become separated from the affect. Through the mechanism of false connection, the affect becomes associated with other ideational content - leading in his case to absurd and even tragicomic obsessional complexes. Freud argues that the Rat Man's murderous wishes in relation to his father in consequence of his father's interference in his masturbatory enjoyment is one of the sources of his sense of guilt. The Rat Man's passionate aggression and the fear of its powerful consequences for both father and son are also linked to the strength of the guilt complex. What is also of interest from the point of view of guilt is that the son, the Rat Man, carries the burden of a debt owed by his father, suggesting an inheritance of guilt (Freud, 1909, p. 211).

In the Rat Man case, Freud alludes to ‘ . . . patients [deriving] a certain satisfaction from their sufferings . . . ’ (1909, p. 183), and the role that this plays in a resistance to their recovery from illness. This issue becomes implicated in later ideas about guilt.

The Rat Man case will be subject to close scrutiny in our later analysis as it provides a very rich tapestry of detail against which to consider the theoretical constructions about guilt.

Freud’s main published case of paranoia was his study of the book written by Dr Daniel Paul Schreber about his own mental illness and published in 1903. Freud’s study, published in 1911 was titled *Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*. While we would not expect guilt to play a prominent part in a case of psychosis, given the way Freud has linked it to neurosis, we ought nevertheless to consider its place in this pathology. What we can note in the Schreber case is the extent to which morality, God, duty and delusions of persecution and injury play a part in the case. Given the scope of the current study, we will not be able to pursue these issues but it may be that our investigations into guilt will throw light on the specificity of neurosis and, in limited respects, its comparison with psychosis. We will be specifically interested in the voices of paranoia and their differentiation from the ‘voice’ of the super-ego.

In the Wolf Man case published in 1918 (*From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*), Freud identifies a desire for punishment in the form of a tormenting anxiety arising in a Wolf phobia expressed in a nodal dream. The Wolf Man engages in aggressive acts against a range of animals and ‘whipping boys’, which are, Freud argues, expressions of anal sadism turned round into

masochism and arising from a sense of guilt about masturbation (Freud, 1918, p.26). Similarly to the Rat Man, the source of the Wolf Man's sense of guilt is shown as a consequence of a powerful unconscious death-wish against his father.

Freud makes a particularly interesting comment in this case:

A part was played in the transformation of his sadism into masochism by a sense of guilt, the presence of which points to developmental processes in spheres other than the sexual one.

Freud, 1918, p. 108

We will see later that the role of aggressive trends in the constitution of guilt as opposed to sexual trends becomes more important for Freud. Perhaps this is heralded in this slightly obscure reference?

Freud's relatively short case, *A Case of Female Homosexuality* (1920) seems, initially, to present a patient lacking in any guilt sense. The girl appeared impervious to prohibitions and discipline in her feverish pursuit of a questionable woman. However her suicide attempt, following remonstrance by her father and rejection by the woman, demonstrated, for Freud, a self-punishing attitude:

From the point of view of self-punishment the girl's action shows us that she had developed in her unconscious strong death-wishes against one or other of her parents . . .

Freud, 1920, p. 162

Like the cases of the Rat Man and the Wolf Man, a sense of guilt, here manifest in the self-punishment of a serious suicide attempt, is consequent upon murderous inclinations towards parental authorities. However, in this case, Freud suggests, the murderous intent is aimed as much at the betraying mother as the prohibiting father. Interestingly, it is her mother to whom she displays an ambivalent attitude of love and hate, prior to the crisis.

In several of these cases we have noted how important a part masturbation plays in the genesis of a sense of guilt. This idea has a prominent and continuing place in Freud's ideas about guilt and needs to be highlighted. Freud makes an important comment about the relation of masturbation to guilt in a footnote added later to his *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* (1905).

[Footnote added 1915:] The problem of why the sense of guilt of neurotics is, as Bleuler [1913] recently recognised, regularly attached to the memory of some masturbatory activity, usually at puberty, still awaits an exhaustive analytic explanation. [Added 1920:] The most general and most important factor concerned must no doubt be that masturbation represents the executive agency of the whole of infantile sexuality and is, therefore, able to take over the sense of guilt attaching to it.

Freud 1905 p. 189n

This helps us to clarify that it is masturbation's role as a focus for infantile sexuality and less the particularity of masturbation itself that is at the root of the problem. The limit placed on the enjoyment of infantile sexuality is the key issue, the specific targeting of masturbation for prohibition makes it only an 'executive agency'.

Freud alludes to guilt in many references to clinical work other than his main published cases. One particularly striking example is that of a woman published in 1932 (Freud, 1933[1932]). It is a detailed example of the persistence and strength of the 'need for punishment' or 'unconscious sense of guilt'. We consider it in full later in this chapter.

In a paper from 1916, Freud turns his attention to a character-type with a particular pathology of guilt. Freud calls these characters '*Criminals from a Sense of Guilt*'. In this short paper, he discusses the propensity to relieve a free-floating guilt by committing real criminal acts in order to have something to attach guilt to (Freud, 1916). Freud discusses this phenomenon again in 1923,

It was a surprise to find that an increase in the *Ucs.* sense of guilt can turn people into criminals. But it is undoubtedly a fact. In many criminals, especially youthful ones, it is possible to detect a very powerful sense of guilt which existed before the crime, and is therefore not its result but its motive. It is as if it was a relief to be able to fasten this unconscious sense of guilt on to something real and immediate.

Freud 1923 p. 52

This appears paradoxical. We would expect guilt to follow a crime, not produce it. We will need to consider to what extent this apparent paradox can be accounted for in the theory.

A final example will complete our review of Freud's clinical work in relation to guilt.

In *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919) Freud examines sadistic and masochistic fantasies frequently found in clinical work. The themes of punishment in these fantasies introduce a conception of masochism which goes on to play an important part in Freud's subsequent understanding of guilt. The theoretical development is outlined below but we will want to consider the beating fantasies in detail when we analyse the problem further in Chapter 5.

We will now go on to look at how Freud has theorised guilt under themed headings.

## **Guilt theorised**

### **Aversion, defence, conflict, and repression.**

One of the hallmarks of psychoanalysis that distinguishes it from virtually all other psychologies is its insistence on the existence of separate portions of the mind that are not at ease with one another. Most theories of mental structure start with a premise of the unity and coherence of the elements of the psyche and only invoke the notion of dislocation between elements where

mental ill health is found. In other words, discordance between different parts of the mind is viewed as pathological. In Freud's view, discordance between different parts of the psyche is the norm - the issue is to determine where and to what extent the span of normal discordance becomes pathological.

How does Freud arrive at this theoretical standpoint and what is its relevance to our study of guilt?

We can see from the early work on hysteria that Freud and Breuer are already thinking, albeit differently, about splits in the psyche. Breuer is theorising in terms of hypnoid states and first and second conditions. Anna O's psychopathology leads him to describe two divergent states of mind, in her case, apparently remarkably divorced from one another - she appears to be, at any one time, in one or another state with little spill over from one to the other.

Freud is less inclined to think in terms of two separate states and more in terms of different portions of the mental apparatus being at odds with one another. In the early work on hysteria and the subsequent early work on obsessional neurosis, this is manifest for Freud in the clinical phenomena he includes under the general term - aversion.

As noted earlier, Freud posits the existence of ideational content (linked to affects) in the psyche that will come to be at odds with later and newer ideational content. Freud is constructing his thesis from a retrospective point of view. A symptom emerges. On tracing back the origin of the

symptom Freud identifies some ideational content, contact with which, for the patient, has led the patient to produce a symptom. Freud, in seeking to understand why this ideational content has produced this response in the patient, proposes the prior existence of some earlier ideational content that is opposed to the new ideational content. In a sense this is a relatively simple process. We could liken it to a chemical process. The patient already contains (or has taken in) a highly active chemical agent which will lie dormant in their system until such time as the patient imbibes or tries to imbibe any of a highly specific group of chemicals which will react with the dormant chemical agent, bringing it to life and producing a huge chemical reaction. This is a situation of toxicity. In Freud's version - the aversion produces an untenable situation - something has to give. Either the new content or the old content has to be refused - or some creative new means to try to accommodate the two has to be found - in any case, the creation of a symptom.

At a later stage in the thesis we will look precisely at examples of the content that is at odds, the chemicals that react badly. For the moment we will note that this aversion is about ideational content and that, for Freud, this aversion leads to various forms of defence. Among the range of possible defences, Freud develops the notion of repression. The theory of repression is one of the fundamentals of psychoanalytic theory and develops in tandem with the division of mental functioning into primary and secondary processes, the development of the theories of consciousness, pre-consciousness and the unconscious and the huge edifice of psychoanalytic theory constructed around the unconscious, how to access it, how to work clinically with it and how to live with it.



## The Ego

Freud's work on the 'I' (*Ich*) emerged out of his earliest psychological explorations and continued throughout his entire career. The work is characterised by repeated returns to the problem but also by some key moments of theorisation when the work moves forward in a relative leap. Most noted of these are the foundational chapter VI of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), the far-reaching *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914) and the two theoretical studies of the early nineteen-twenties *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923).

In 1900, Freud identifies the ego as the source of defence (or aversion) in his theory of repression. As the agency of perception the ego has a relation to the external world and at this point it is equated with consciousness.

*On Narcissism* (1914) is Freud's most sustained discussion of the ego since his early work. Freud argues here that the ego cannot exist at the beginning of an infant's life but must be developed. This crucial point emphasises for us that the construction of the ego is a process and one that involves the infant's early relations with his or her environment.

It is also in this paper that we have the elaboration of the ego as itself containing a complex of agencies - the ego ideal, the ideal ego and later the super-ego. These agencies are discussed in a separate section below. For the moment we need to acknowledge, first, that the ego becomes an elaborated system incorporating ideals but also remains as a location for the action of these ideals and the super-ego. It is also of importance that significant portions of the ego are now

known to be unconscious. Its complexity develops in tandem with Freud's thinking throughout most of his further work.

### **A seeing/observing agency**

As we have seen above, the idea of a 'seeing/observing agency' is present from the very beginning. But we must note in passing that the first reference to it comes from Breuer in his discussion of the Anna O case (1895, p. 46).

What is invoked and what is at stake in this 'seeing/observing agency'?

In the first instance, the idea of a seeing/observing agency is profoundly familiar to anyone culturally infected by the central idea of the great patriarchal monotheistic religions of Judaism, Old Testament Christianity and Islam. The idea of an all-seeing God is a cornerstone, indeed the cornerstone, of these religions. We will need to bear this in mind when we come to consider the cultural significance of guilt. And this (to some extent) is certainly what Freud did in his great studies of civilisation and religion (1912-13, 1927, 1930 and 1938.)

For the purposes of this section, though, we will focus on the psychological issues that Freud deals with in his theorisation of a 'seeing/observing agency'.

Freud comes at the idea of a seeing/observing agency from several angles. On the one hand he engages with it in his clinical discussions of paranoia. On the other he begins to construct a theory of it in his efforts to elaborate the structure and functioning of the ego, normal and neurotic. As we have seen, it also emerges in his attempts to deal with the clinical phenomena of shame and guilt.

The seeing/observing agency was also linked to the idea of censorship so fundamental to Freud's thinking about dreaming and the unconscious.

We know the self-observing agency as the ego-censor, the conscience; it is this that exercises the dream-censorship during the night, from which the repressions of inadmissible wishful impulses proceed.

Freud, 1916-17, p. 429

It is in his study of narcissism that Freud takes the elementary ideas about a seeing/observing agency and begins to develop them into a thesis about a portion of the ego that stands in judgement of another portion of the ego (Freud, 1914). In section III of this paper, Freud is discussing the process of idealisation and the setting up in the ego of an ideal ego and an ego ideal. He goes on to say

It would not surprise us to find a special psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal is ensured and which, with this end in view, constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal.

Freud, 1914, p. 95

Freud goes on to liken this agency to “what we call our ‘conscience’” (p. 95). He continues by linking this phenomenon to the delusions of being watched of paranoiacs and concludes by saying:

Patients of this sort [paranoiacs] complain that all their thoughts are known and their actions watched and supervised; they are informed of the functioning of this agency by voices which characteristically speak to them in the third person (‘Now she’s thinking of that again’, ‘now he’s going out’).

Freud, 1914, p. 95

And crucially for our purposes here:

This complaint is justified; it describes the truth. A power of this kind, watching, discovering and criticizing all our intentions, does really exist. Indeed, it exists in every one of us in normal life.’

Freud, 1914, p. 95

It is important to note the inclusion of ‘criticizing’ here. Up to now, the seeing/observing agency has been watching and discovering. At this point it becomes also an agency that ‘criticiz [es] all our intentions’. This move is extremely important for what comes after. This agency has gone from being a somewhat neutral observer to a relatively malignant presence and this move is

crucial for making the transition from a kindly parental benchmark to a persecutory and tyrannical authority.

It is from these formulations that Freud goes on, in the early nineteen-twenties, to elaborate the system of ideals and the super ego. During the intervening period Freud worked on his paper on *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) and the examination of the ego in these conditions contributed to his thinking on the seeing/observing agency.

It is in a discussion of melancholia in 1921 that Freud next alludes to this watching agency. Freud describes a leading characteristic of melancholia as ‘cruel self-depreciation of the ego combined with relentless self-criticism and bitter self-reproaches’ (1921, p. 109). The cruelty and severity of the criticism levelled at the ego in melancholia distinguish it from normality but the same ego ideal is at work and responsible for ‘ . . . self-observation, the moral conscience, the censorship of dreams and the chief influence in repression.’ (p. 110).<sup>6</sup>

In this same 1921 study *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud develops ideas first dealt with in *Mourning and Melancholia*, on identification. This crucial concept plays an important part in his understanding of the development of the ideal system and the super ego.

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<sup>6</sup> Melancholia is also distinguished from normality or the neuroses by its incorporation of or identification with the object. However, it is only its excessive severity that we are concerned about here in as much as it sheds light on the operation of the seeing/observing agency.

It is in *The Ego and The Id* (1923) that this seeing/observing (and now criticizing) agency comes to be called the super ego. In this study, this agency is characterised as critical and condemnatory in normal subjects and severe, cruel, raging, wrathful and harsh in neurotic and melancholic patients. What began as a watchful agency has emerged as an attacking agency. Freud's theorisations of this agency and the sources of its attacking force are dealt with in the next section.

### **Ideal Ego, Ego Ideal and Super-Ego**

In *On Narcissism* (1914) Freud is beginning to elaborate a theory of the ego that is able to accommodate a range of difficult theoretical and clinical issues. Freud is trying to grapple with self-regard in as much as it appears in problems as apparently diverse as physical illness, paranoia, schizophrenia, hypochondria, the magical mental life of children and 'primitive people', intellectual endeavour and love. In the course of this relatively short but highly condensed study, he tries to delineate divisions in the ego and to analyse the relations between the divided parts.

In sections I and II he examines a range of evidence and in section III begins to organise a metapsychological structure incorporating an ideal ego, an ego ideal and the seeing/observing agency,

He posits a primary narcissism that develops, with the ego, out of early auto-erotism. This libidinal cathexis of the ego can later be directed to objects but it can also be returned to the ego - or, rather, to an idealised version of the ego. Freud re-invokes his thesis that a satisfaction once

gained will not be given up without a struggle, to support the idea of a return to narcissistic satisfaction.

As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shown himself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal.

Freud, 1914, p.94<sup>7</sup>

This ideal can be built out of a wide range of material - the image of what the child is/was (or imagined himself to be), the image of what he would like to be, the image of a chosen object. The specific trajectory of each individual will determine the make-up of their ideal/s. The important issue from the point of view of the psychical structure is that a new standard is set up for the beleaguered ego to aspire to. And the seeing/observing agency will have the job of assessing to what extent the ego is measuring up to the new standard.

It would not surprise us if we were to find a special psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal is ensured and which, with this end in view, constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal. If such an agency does exist, we cannot possibly come upon it as a *discovery* - we can only *recognize* it; for we may reflect that what we call our 'conscience' has the required characteristics.

Freud, 1914, p. 95

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<sup>7</sup> The translation of *Ich Ideal* and *Ideal Ich* in this paper have been the source of much discussion. See Appendix X.

It is from these ideas that Freud goes on to elaborate the super ego in *The Ego and The Id* (1923). To do so he has to find his way through the difficult tangle involving the idealised ego, the seeing/observing agency which forms a point of judgement on the differential between the ego and the ideal, the intricacies of identification discussed in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and the death drive that he had introduced in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* (1920).

Freud argues (1923) that the child's journey through the Oedipus and castration complexes involves a complicated negotiation of his relations to the parents in which the child will opt first for an object love for the mother then under pressure from the father will institute an identification with the father. The full positive and negative Oedipus complex will encompass object love (and hostility) for both mother and father and identification with both. The dominant identification in a particular individual will determine their sexed identity.

These founding experiences and struggles through relationships and identifications are intimately bound up with the development of the ego, ideal ego, ego ideal and super ego. Indeed they ARE the development of the ego, ideal ego, ego ideal and super ego.

*The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a pre-cipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super ego.*

Freud, 1923, p. 34 (italics in original)



While the relation to the father plays the decisive role in the elementary formation of the super ego, the wider social and cultural environment builds on that foundation to consolidate the growing super ego:

As a child grows up, the role of the father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship. The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt.

Freud, 1923, p. 37

*The Ego and The Id* is a very theoretically dense and detailed study and the discussions of the ego ideal and super ego are full of complicated twists and turns.<sup>8</sup> We propose here to give a schematic outline of the important features of them but to return in the analysis in chapter five to some of the finer points.

For the moment it will be important to provide some understanding of the character of the super ego in its relations to the ego. In section V of *The Ego and The Id*, entitled *The Dependent Relationships of The Ego*, Freud examines a range of clinical examples of conscious and

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<sup>8</sup> Freud himself acknowledges the complications of the text: 'The complexity of our subject-matter must be an excuse for the fact that none of the chapter-headings of this book quite correspond to their contents, and that in turning to new aspects of the topic we are constantly harking back to matters that have already been dealt with.' 1923, p. 48

unconscious guilt. In particular, he compares the specific mechanisms and relative severity of guilt in Obsessional Neurosis, Melancholia and Hysteria and also considers normal psychology. We will consider these clinical differences later but need here to grasp the essentials of the super ego across all of these conditions. Freud asks the general question,

How is it that the super-ego manifests itself essentially as a sense of guilt (or rather, as criticism - for the sense of guilt is the perception in the ego answering to this criticism) and moreover develops such extraordinary harshness and severity towards the ego?

Freud, 1923, p. 53

Freud's answers this question for each of the different pathologies. In the case of melancholia it is 'a pure culture of the death instinct', in obsessional neurosis 'an instinct of destruction' 'an actual substitution of hate for love' in relation to the object. The hysteric's ego, by contrast, represses ideas that are in conflict with the harsh super-ego.

In the Oedipal journey, the child has identified with the father. This identification (and the attendant modification in object cathexes) has required a defusion of the drives in the form of a desexualisation or sublimation. Freud is working here to theorise the economic side of this development to account for the severity and cruelty of the super-ego.

After sublimation the erotic component no longer has the power to bind the whole of the destructiveness that was combined with it, and this is released in the form of an inclination to aggression and destruction, This defusion would be the

source of the general character of harshness and cruelty exhibited by the ideal - its dictatorial 'Thou shalt'.

Freud, 1923, pp. 54-5

Before embarking on discussion of the death drive it is worth noting a few other points about the super-ego from this paper. First it is of considerable importance that the super-ego is overwhelmingly unconscious. Similarly the sense of guilt is often but not always unconscious. In this paper about the id, Freud shows what relation the id has to the super-ego. Second, this relation of the super ego to the id is the source of the phylogenetic inheritance that transfers the 'experiences of past ages' from one generation to the next (1923, p. 55).

### **Self-punishment, the repetition compulsion, the death drive and masochism.**

As we have seen Breuer discusses self-injury and a ' . . . need for being ill . . . ' in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895, p. 243). Freud frames self-punishment in the form of self-reproach in his early work. He deals with the phenomenon of self-punishment most obviously in the case of the Rat Man (1909).

By bringing his naughtiness forward he was trying to force punishments and beatings out of his father, and in that way to obtain from him the masochistic sexual satisfaction that he desired.

1909, p. 28

Later in the Rat Man study Freud refers to ‘. . . a masochistic aim of being beaten or punished’ (p.46). Here then we have what appears to be a ‘desire’ for punishment. Later Freud calls it a ‘need for punishment’ and appears to use it relatively interchangeably with ‘a sense of guilt’ (1924).<sup>9</sup>

The idea of a ‘compulsion to repeat’ was introduced in Freud’s short paper on *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* (1914). Here Freud showed that patients would repeat an experience in the transference rather than reproduce it as a memory. By the early nineteen-twenties he had developed this further into a trend that mitigated against the development of a cure. This ‘resistance to recovery’, ‘negative therapeutic reaction’ and ‘unconscious need for punishment’ are linked by Freud to the destructiveness of the death drive. This major thesis was introduced by Freud in his theoretical study *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

Freud had shown that human psychology tended towards the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of un-pleasure exemplified best in his analysis of the desire behind the construction of dreams (1900). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, however, he demonstrated that a range of phenomena appeared to conflict with this. The nightmares of traumatised soldiers led them back to their terrifying trauma (and obvious un-pleasure), small children exhibited a tendency to replay unpleasant experiences and patients in psychoanalysis acted out rather than consigned to memory some repressed material and clung on to illness rather than pursuing recovery. Freud sees in these a ‘compulsion to repeat’ some un-pleasurable experience and says of it that it is,

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix X for a discussion of these terms and translation issues.

. . . something that seems more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides.

Freud, 1920, p. 23

Freud shows that the compulsive repetition of the un-pleasurable experience is often the active repetition of what was, initially, a passive experience. The traumatised person suffered ‘fright’ - an unanticipated excess of external stimuli - that they were unable to shield themselves against and which results in excitations that are not bound together with the other contents of the psyche but which circulate as unbound cathectic energy. It is an effort to revisit the original overwhelming stimulating experience, with a view to taming and binding it, that we witness in the ‘compulsion to repeat’ and its frequent failure that precisely contributes to its repetitiveness.

Freud describes the functioning of the ‘compulsion to repeat’ as being like ‘some ‘daemonic’ force at work’ (1920, p. 35). It is this ‘daemonic’ dimension that leads Freud to link the destructive power of the ‘compulsion to repeat’ to the force of a drive - the destructive death drive.

Freud considers how two classes of drive<sup>10</sup> - a death drive and a self-preservative/sexual/life drive may correspond to biological processes in the reproductive life of uni-cellular and multi-cellular organisms. He proposes that there is a tendency in organic life to return to an original state of inertia and that ‘. . . *the aim of all life is death*’ (p. 38). The self-preservative drives seek

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<sup>10</sup> The translation of the German *Trieb* into the English ‘drive’ or ‘instinct’ is discussed in Appendix X

to prolong life in the service of the continuation of the species and the two drives therefore operate in an uneasy divergence. The self-preservative drives seek life, reproduction and perfection while the death drive plays an undermining and destructive role.

In *The Ego and The Id* (1923), when discussing the super-ego, Freud describes the ‘. . .source of its power to dominate . . . The source, that is, of its compulsive character which manifests itself in the form of a categorical imperative.’ (p. 35). Here we have the compulsiveness of repetition, the death drive, the action of the super-ego and the ‘categorical imperative’ bound up together. Later, while discussing the introjection of the parents as the initiation of the super-ego, he goes further and calls Kant’s categorical imperative ‘. . . the direct heir of the Oedipus Complex’ (1924, p. 167).

In 1915 Freud argued that there was no primary masochism (p.128). By 1924, and with the death drive in place, he changed his view and proposed the existence of a primary masochism.<sup>11</sup> His 1919 study of beating phantasies, exactly halfway between 1915 and 1924 no doubt contributed to his thinking on this subject. In *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924) Freud distinguishes three types of masochism: feminine masochism, considered unproblematic, moral masochism which he describes as an unconscious sense of guilt and the original erotogenic masochism or pleasure in pain which underwrites the other two forms.

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<sup>11</sup> In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) we can see Freud’s thinking changing when he concedes that, ‘. . . there *might* be such a thing as primary masochism - a possibility which I had contested at that time [1915].’ p. 328

Freud describes feminine masochism in males as manifesting in a demand for cruel and degrading treatment, from a particular object and generally as punishment for some indeterminate 'crime'. This masochist wishes, Freud says, to be treated ' . . . like a small and helpless child, but, particularly, like a naughty child' (1924, p. 162).

Moral masochism requires the pursuit of suffering but the suffering itself is what is important, not its administration by a particular other. Freud distinguishes moral masochism from the unconscious extended morality of those inhibited by an especially strong conscience. In both cases, and reflecting our previous discussions of the structure of guilt, the sense of guilt and the need for punishment arise because of the tension operating between the ego and the super-ego. However, where the relative strength and sadism of the super-ego fuels the super-morality of the morally inhibited, it is the desire for suffering of the masochist's own ego that is the source of moral masochism. This key issue of the relative balance of the victim-like ego and the aggression of the super-ego raises many interesting questions.

In the case of feminine masochism, it is derived relatively directly from the primary erotogenic masochism. For moral masochism, the picture is much more complicated, reflecting its rather later development. To explain it, Freud invokes the defusion of the life and death drives and argues that while a portion of the destructiveness of the death drive is directed outward in the form of aggression towards external objects, a portion of this destructive energy remains directed at the ego - this is a residuum of the primary erotogenic masochism. A further portion of the destructive energy, first directed outwards towards objects, can be directed back towards the ego to produce a secondary masochism that is added to the primary masochism. In this way, the

power of the death drive fuels the search for suffering and the self-destructive behaviour of the moral masochist.

Self-injury can take many forms including the ‘negative therapeutic reaction’ with its refusal to give up illness. Freud ascribes this self-injurious behaviour to ‘an unconscious sense of guilt’ and equates it also to a ‘need for punishment’

Patients do not easily believe us when we tell them about the unconscious sense of guilt. They know only too well by what torments - the pangs of conscience - a conscious sense of guilt, a consciousness of guilt, expresses itself, and they therefore cannot admit that they could harbour exactly analogous impulses in themselves without being in the least aware of them. We may, I think, to some extent meet their objection if we give up the term ‘unconscious sense of guilt’, which is in any case psychologically incorrect, and speak instead of a ‘need for punishment’ which covers the observed state of affairs just as aptly.

Freud, 1924, p. 166

We might wonder, in passing, at Freud’s optimism that a change of name might do anything to counter patients’ resistance to the idea of a masochistic trend at their core but we will have occasion later to question what might be at stake in this name change.

Freud provides a very clear and detailed example of this ‘need for punishment’ in his lecture on anxiety of 1932,



I once succeeded in freeing an unmarried woman, no longer young, from the complex of symptoms which had condemned her for some fifteen years to an existence of torment and had excluded her from any participation in life. She now felt she was well, and she plunged into eager activity, in order to develop her by no means small talent and to snatch a little recognition, enjoyment, and success, late though the moment was. But every one of her attempts ended either with people letting her know or with herself recognising that she was too old to accomplish anything in that field. After each outcome of this kind a relapse into illness would have been the obvious thing, but she was no longer able to bring that about. Instead, she met each time with an accident which put her out of action for a time and caused her suffering. She fell down and sprained her ankle or hurt her knee, or she injured her hand in something she was doing. When she was made aware of how great her own share might be in these apparent accidents, she, so to say, changed her technique. Instead of accidents, indispositions appeared on the same provocations - catarrhs, sore throats, influenzal conditions, rheumatic swellings - till at last she made up her mind to resign her attempts and the whole agitation came to an end.

Freud, 1933[1932], pp.108-9

Freud declares this an 'unconscious need for punishment' and goes on to say:

If only the words went together better, we should be justified in calling it an "unconscious sense of guilt".

Freud, 1933[1932], p. 109

We will look in some detail at this long example in the later analysis. For the moment it stands as a testament to the inventiveness and tenacity of the need for punishment/unconscious sense of guilt.

We will look now at the small point that is raised in the second small quote. The qualifier 'If only the words went together better...' refers to Freud's recognition that there is something wrong with the idea of an unconscious affect.

### **Affect**

We saw in the *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) that Freud linked guilt to fear. By the time he wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) he had a much more nuanced conception of fear.

In our discussion of trauma we showed how Freud argued that it was the surprise of fright that overwhelmed the psyche and introduced unbound excitation into it. As part of this argument Freud distinguishes between fright, fear and anxiety.

'Anxiety' describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. 'Fear' requires a definite object of which to be afraid. 'Fright', however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise. I do not believe anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis. There is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses.

Freud, 1920, pp. 12-13

What Freud goes on to argue is that the state of anxiety is one in which a preparation to deal with incoming stimuli has been made so that the dangerous excitation can be bound. This functions as a final line of defence against these stimuli. He calls this, slightly confusingly a 'preparedness for

anxiety’ and argues that where good preparations, in the form of hypercathecting the systems for the reception of stimuli, are made, this will protect against trauma, except in cases where the quantity of excitation is so great that it exceeds the capacity of the protecting measures to cope.

Underlying this thesis about the function of anxiety here is the thesis about the quantity of excitation entering the receptive apparatus and its binding into the psychical system. It underscores the idea of a psychical system that has to deal with stimuli from external sources but also those from endopsychic sources. As the anxiety example shows, alongside the question of limits concerning the quantity of excitation that a psychical system can tolerate, is the question of the specific organisation of any particular psychical system in relation to incoming stimuli, and additionally, the specific set of circumstances pertaining to any instance of incoming stimuli. Freud revisits and clarifies these issues again in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) where he distinguishes between signal or anticipatory anxiety and anxiety proper. This distinction is one we will look at in more depth in our analysis of the relation of guilt and anxiety.

The last section ended with a reference to Freud saying there was something problematic about the formulation ‘an unconscious sense of guilt’ (1933 [1932], p.109). Freud had considered something of this problem in 1915,

. . . the possibility of the attribute of unconsciousness would be completely excluded as far as emotions, feelings and affects are concerned. But in psycho-analytic practice we are accustomed to speak of unconscious love, hate anger, etc., and find it impossible to avoid even the strange conjunction, ‘unconscious consciousness of guilt’, or a paradoxical ‘unconscious anxiety’. Is there more meaning in the use of these terms than there is in speaking of ‘unconscious instincts’?

Freud, 1915, p.177

Freud goes on to clarify that an affect cannot be unconscious but that the idea associated with the affect is repressed. He argues that the quantity of excitation associated with an idea that has been repressed can produce one of three effects. It can remain, unaffected, as the affect, it can undergo modification into a different affect and most likely, anxiety or it can be prevented from developing. It is these effects which are labelled 'unconscious affect'. He goes on to say

. . . there are no unconscious affects as there are unconscious ideas. But there may very well be in the system *Ucs.* affective structures which, like others become conscious. The whole difference arises from the fact that ideas are cathexes - basically of memory-traces - whilst affects and emotions correspond to the processes of discharge, the final manifestations of which are perceived as feelings. In this present state of our knowledge of affects and emotions we cannot express this difference more clearly.

Freud, 1915, p.178

In Freud's discussion of trauma we noted that anxiety played a privileged part in protecting against trauma. Here again we see that anxiety seems to have a privileged role as a destiny for affect.

Anxiety, and its relation to guilt is taken up again in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930). Freud identifies a stage before the setting up of the super-ego in which the child experiences social anxiety in response to a perceived danger from an external authority. In addition, he clarifies the relation of anxiety and guilt. He argues that the sense of guilt is a particular and

localised variety of anxiety. Like the sense of guilt, anxiety may be conscious or unconscious. In the case of both guilt and anxiety Freud puts in question the formulation ‘unconscious’ guilt or anxiety since they are affects which cannot, by his definition of unconsciousness, be unconscious. In the case of anxiety he modifies the formulation to ‘. . . a feeling, of possibilities of anxiety’ (Freud, 1930, p. 135).

We will want to consider, in the later analysis, the relevance of these questions for our understanding of ‘guilt’, ‘sense of guilt’, ‘unconscious sense of guilt’ and the relation of anxiety to guilt.

### **The Voice**

In numerous places we have made reference to the place of spoken injunctions in relation to guilt and in particular to the functioning of the super-ego. For example we noted that the seeing/observing agency communicated its commentary on the behaviour of the paranoiac by ‘voices which characteristically speak to them in the third person (‘Now she’s thinking of that again’, ‘now he’s going out’).’ (Freud, 1914, p. 95) and we acknowledged Freud’s depiction of the super-ego as an agency that dictates ‘Thou shalt’ (Freud, 1923, p. 55). Earlier in the paper from which this quote is taken Freud had in fact made the ‘Thou shalt’ more complicated when he showed that it was not only a positive injunction but a negative one too,

The super-ego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against these choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: ‘You *ought to be* like this (like your father).’ It also comprises the prohibition: ‘You *may not be* like this

(like your father) - that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.'

Freud, 1923, p. 34

The notion of an imperative in a 'categorical imperative' in itself invokes the idea of a spoken command.

We might also consider Freud's frequent references to the sense of guilt as 'noisy' or even 'silent', usually, but not always, corresponding to conscious or unconscious guilt.

We noted further that what began as a relatively benign seeing/observing agency became a criticising agency and was capable of becoming, most notably in melancholia, a raging agency.

We need here to consider the place of the voice and its corollary, hearing, in the generation and functioning of guilt.

What relation exists between the third person commentaries of paranoiacs, the imperatives of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not', the ordinary 'voice' of conscience and the apparent screaming apoplexy of melancholia? What does Freud say about these phenomena and their localisation in psychological structure? Freud did not write a paper specifically on this topic but we can grasp his general ideas from fragmented comments.

Freud specifies the auditory origin of the super-ego:

In all these situations the super-ego displays its independence of the conscious ego and its intimate relations with the unconscious id. Having regard, now, to the importance we have ascribed to pre-conscious verbal residues in the ego, the question arises whether it can be the case that the super-ego, in so far as it is *Ucs.*, consists in such word-presentations and, if it does not, what else it consists in. Our tentative answer will be that it is as impossible for the super-ego as for the ego to disclaim its origin from things heard; for it is a part of the ego and remains accessible to consciousness by way of these word-presentations (concepts, abstractions). But the *cathectic energy* does not reach these contents of the super-ego from auditory perception (instruction or reading) but from sources in the id.

Freud, 1923, p. 52 Emphasis in original

Freud is abundantly clear even if tentative. The super-ego originates from ‘things heard’. Freud had earlier in the same paper specified the role of auditory perception in the construction of memory (as opposed to hallucination),

Verbal residues are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system *Pcs.* has, as it were, a special sensory source. The visual components of word-presentations are secondary, acquired through reading, and may to begin with be left on one side; so may the motor images of words, which except with deaf-mutes, play the part of auxiliary indications. *In essence a word is after all the mnemic residue of a word that has been heard.*

Freud, 1923, pp. 20-21 Emphasis added

Freud could not be clearer. For words to reside in the memory they must have been heard. We note here the reference to the pre-conscious and its 'special sensory source' but wonder if this might better be a 'facility' rather than a source. The question we need to consider is where, to what extent and how the heard words that constitute the super-ego are located in the psyche and what differentiates them from the words that correspond to repression in the id and those that correspond to the other parts of the ego? In addition, there is a question about the affective tone of what is heard - how does the auditory force of a particular injunction impact upon the hearer and what relation is there to the '*cathectic energy*' deriving from the id, in the previous quote?

Because Freud has made an association between the commentaries of paranoiacs and the critical voice of the super-ego we ought also to consider the point at which paranoiac's hallucinatory voices finish and the dictates of the super-ego begin. We may have a hint in relation to this from Freud's early work on dreams. Freud emphasises the importance of the 'spoken' or, rather, the 'heard' in his analysis of 'direct speech' in dreams (Freud, 1900, pp. 418-25). We will therefore want to dissect the differences between these phenomena and the injunctions of the super-ego and to try to situate them in relation to psychical structure.

### **Civilisation, Religion, Morality and Neurosis**

In 1897 Freud introduced an idea which he would return to repeatedly throughout the remainder of his work and one upon which his theorisation of guilt sometimes rested. This was the idea that human civilisation was built upon a renunciation of perversion and sexual freedom (Freud, 1950 [1897]). This renunciation is returned to particularly in "*Civilised*" *Sexual Morality & Modern Nervous Illness* (1908), *Totem and Taboo* (1912/13) and *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930). We ought not to forget that in this year following his father's death, Freud was grappling with



his own self-reproaches analysed particularly in his dream before (or after)<sup>12</sup> his father's funeral and that he was drafting the very foundations of psychoanalysis in relation to his own self-analysis at this time (Freud, 1950 [1896] p. 233; 1900, pp. 317-318).

Freud does not make specific reference to guilt in "*Civilised*" *Sexual Morality & Modern Nervous Illness* (1908) as this study pre-dates the developing understanding of it that emerges in, first, *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), and second, *On Narcissism* (1914). However the essential point of the paper, that is, that the development of the morally derived restraint on sexual indulgence is the source of an increase in nervous illness, accords with a key strand in later arguments about guilt. Freud is approaching the question from a sociological point of view so that the features of the 'modern nervous illness' he is discussing are not specified but we can be sure that guilt is a key component. In a discussion of the various trajectories of the sexual drives under the influence of cultural suppression he states,

All who wish to be more noble-minded than their constitution allows fall victims to neurosis; they would have been more healthy if it could have been possible for them to be less good.

Freud, 1908, p. 191

The forces that required them to be overly good, given their constitution, and which thereby propelled them into nervous illness are precisely those that constitute guilt.

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<sup>12</sup> The account Freud gives in *The Interpretation of Dreams* has the dream before the funeral, the more contemporaneous account in his letter to Fliess of Nov. 2nd 1896 situates the dream after the funeral.

In *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13) Freud investigates the origin of guilt and focuses also on remorse. One important reference in the preface gives an idea of one of Freud's influences.

Though expressed in a negative form and directed towards another subject-matter, they [taboos] do not differ in their psychological nature from Kant's 'categorical imperative', which operates in a compulsive fashion and rejects any conscious motives.<sup>13</sup>

Freud 1912-13 p. xiv

The close relationship between taboos and guilt suggests that Kant's 'categorical imperative' may be of importance to us and later psychoanalytic commentators link the psychoanalytic theory of guilt to the 'categorical imperative' and to other strands in Kant's philosophy (Copjec, 1996).

In *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), Freud postulates an early era characterised by tribal arrangements headed by a powerful father. In this state of affairs, the powerful father enjoys total power and total obedience. Unfortunately, in this undemocratic arrangement, everyone else suffers to some degree. A band of sons decide to take action and kill the powerful father. It is, crucially, the remorse over the father's death that they feel, that leads them to found a new level of civilisation based on a degree of sacrifice and renunciation of the satisfaction of their drives. It

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<sup>13</sup> There are other and earlier references to Kant's 'categorical imperative', for example in Chapter 1, Part F. of *The Interpretation of Dreams* on 'The Moral Sense in Dreams' where Freud quotes Hildebrandt (1900, p.68).

is this guilty act, the murder of the primal father, and the subsequent remorse, which Freud sees as recapitulated in the Oedipus and, especially, the castration complexes of children. Guilt, then, is a legacy from a primal crime shrouded in mythology, but foundational for human society.

It is in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) that Freud has most to say about guilt. The size, complexity and importance of this study means that we will look at its content in some detail.

In chapter VIII, Freud makes clear what his intention in writing this text is:

. . . my intention [is] to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilisation and to show that the price we pay for our advance in civilisation is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt.

Freud, 1930, p. 134

And true to his intention, the bulk of this study either leads towards or directly engages with this proposition. *Civilisation and its Discontents* provides the most comprehensive theoretical elaboration of the problem of guilt in Freud's work.

In this large and complex work Freud revisits a number of problems touched on earlier - civilisation as a process, the prices we pay for it in unhappiness and neurosis, love and fellow-

feeling, aggression between people, the aggressiveness of the super-ego, masochism, the origins of guilt and the pervasiveness of guilt.

Freud builds on the ideas of the super-ego put forward in *The Ego and The Id* (1923) and brings them into closer association with the thesis that civilisation as a process is problematic for mental health and yet, at least in part, necessary for human development. It is unpicking the relation between culture and psyche that Freud is concerned with, and in particular, how civilisation is produced and makes its effects felt at the level of the individual.

Here, Freud goes beyond the arguments put forward in all his previous discussions of guilt.

After touching on the egoistic basis of religious feeling and arguing that the purpose of life is in accordance with the pleasure principle, Freud gets down to the business of examining human suffering in culture and the means employed to alleviate it. He asks why people are unhappy in culture and proposes what looks like a paradoxical notion - that ‘. . . what we call our civilisation is largely responsible for our misery . . .’ (Freud, 1930, p. 86)

While this appears to be similar to the arguments made earlier it differs in fundamental respects. Freud is no longer arguing that a phylogenetic memory of a primal crime causes guilt or that the suppression of sexuality causes guilt, although both remain implicated. Now he is arguing that there is something about the process of civilisation that causes it. We need to look at his complex argument in detail.

The portion of culture that Freud particularly concerns himself with in this study is that pertaining to the regulation of the relations between people. He argues that the formation of communities allows for an increase in security but must be paid for with a sacrifice of individual satisfactions and this formation creates a new type of tension between the individual and the group. He suggests this is the basis for a hostility toward civilisation and is scathing in his criticism of those who promote utopian ideas about the potential for a comfortable and tension-free civilisation.

Most importantly, Freud also argues that there is a similarity between the development of civilisation and the libidinal development of an individual. In both cases drives must be renounced and, in the best case scenario, sublimation will be the mechanism by which the energy of the renounced drive will be redirected. The particular closeness of sublimation to social achievement is stressed.

Freud continues with an examination of the intractable human problem of love - which he calls ‘. . . one of the foundations of civilisation . . .’ - the other being work (Freud, 1930, p. 101). However he is critical of aim-inhibited love for others which he sees as limited to a minority and argues in favour of sexually infused object-love despite its exclusiveness. However, the taboos and restrictions which must be put in place to curb sexuality have, as we have seen earlier, problematic consequences for individuals and society.

He goes on to argue that there is a tendency to bind people together into social units in civilisation and that there is a fundamental tension between this aim and the specific aim of the sexual drive to bind only two people - and stop at that. To understand the binding aim of civilisation he questions one of the ideals of later civilisation - the injunction that “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Freud, 1930, p. 109).

Freud is hugely contemptuous of the viability of this idea and produces multiple examples to demonstrate its absurdity. He concludes two pages of derision with the following summation:

. . . men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness.

Freud, 1930, p. 111

He sums up his view by quoting Plautus, “Man is a wolf to man.” (p. 111)

It is due to this primary aggression, this ‘. . . primary mutual hostility of human beings . . .’ (p. 112) that civilisation has so many problems. Civilisation, in trying to contain human aggression, institutes taboos, rules and regulations concerning relations - sexual and neighbourly - but in doing so, it only partially succeeds because this aggression is ‘. . . an indestructible feature of human nature . . .’ (Freud, 1930, p. 114).

At this point in his discussion Freud argues that *both* the sexual and aggressive drives are limited to meet the demands of civilisation and argues that this explains the limit to human happiness imposed by culture.

In the next section Freud returns to the question of the drives and clarifies how he now sees them. Via a discussion of narcissism, sadism and masochism he reiterates that the old distinction between the self-preservative or ego drives and the sexual drives no longer holds but that there are two great drive systems - a destructive death drive from which is derived the aggressive tendencies discussed above and a life drive which subsumes both self-preservative and sexual drives.<sup>14</sup> That these drives are invariably fused in the psyche does not prevent their isolation as theoretical constructs. From this clarification Freud is able to state that the function of civilization is the struggle for life as played out in the difficult relation between the life and death drives.

In section VII we reach the point where Freud begins to talk explicitly about guilt. He begins by asking how civilisation limits aggressiveness and suggests that we can find the answer by looking at the comparative process in the individual. However, the process he describes in the individual has moved on from that described in his earlier versions. Here, the aggressiveness, originating in the ego, is turned back on the ego to become the super-ego but the aggression of the super-ego is viewed as the same as that which the ego would otherwise have dispensed outwards, indeed wanted to dispense outwards. There is something vengeful in this new

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<sup>14</sup> Freud had reconfigured the drives in *The Ego and The Id* (1923). Here he builds on the distinction between the life and death drives.

formulation which was absent in previous ones. As previously, it is the tension between the ego and the super-ego that produces the sense of guilt.

But this still leaves a question about how guilt is determined. Freud goes on to argue that there is no innate capacity for distinguishing good and bad<sup>15</sup> and that what functions to decide on good and bad comes from outside. It is the fear of a loss of love, a related loss of security and ‘Above all, [being] exposed to the danger . . . of punishment’ in a small child that produces social anxiety, which is what, Freud states, the sense of guilt is, at this early stage (Freud, 1930, p. 124). This social anxiety takes the form of a fear of being caught or exposed but, Freud says, only becomes guilt at the point at which the external authority becomes internalised in the form of the super-ego.

This momentous occurrence, the installation of the super-ego, however, changes nothing in terms of the severity of the threat. The anxiety produced previously by a threatening external authority is replaced by anxiety produced intra-psychically by the attacking super-ego. This, Freud says, is due to ‘. . . genetic influence, which leads to the survival of what is past and has been surmounted . . .’ (Freud, 1930, p. 125).

Following this Freud notes a further problem: it appears that the most virtuous have the most tormenting of super-egos which runs counter to what might be expected. Freud suggests an answer to this in the two stages of development - anxiety through fear then anxiety from the super-ego.

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<sup>15</sup> On this point Freud is clearly non-Kantian.



At this point he acknowledges that there are,

. . . two origins of the sense of guilt: one arising from fear of an authority, and the other, later on, arising from fear of the super-ego. The first insists upon a renunciation of instinctual satisfactions; the second, as well as doing this, presses for punishment, since the continuance of the forbidden wishes cannot be concealed from the super-ego.

Freud, 1930, p. 127

Freud then explains the continuing severity of the super-ego by reference to the renunciation of satisfaction. The child renounced satisfactions under pressure from an external authority, however, the persistence of the *wish* to pursue those satisfactions cannot be hidden from the all-seeing super-ego which therefore must continue to administer punishment.

But still this does not explain the severity of the super-ego in the very virtuous. At this point, Freud comes up with a new explanation that he characterises as a fundamentally psychoanalytic one. It is an explanation that draws precisely upon the economic point of view in psychoanalysis. Freud uses the question of the aggressive drive to furnish the explanation:

. . . every piece of aggression whose satisfaction the subject gives up is taken over by the super-ego and increases the latter's aggressiveness (against the ego).

Freud, 1930, p. 129

In this way, the child's own aggression against those who stand between him and his satisfactions is compounded by his being prevented also from exercising his vengeful feelings against them. The internalisation of the opposing authority in the form of the super-ego brings with it not only the aggression of the authority and the reactive aggression of the unsatisfied child but also the accumulated frustration of the unemployed vengefulness. Ultimately, then, the severity of the super-ego is in keeping with the child's own aggressiveness towards the external authority. Thus the degree of guilt, in turn, will be substantially determined by the child's own aggressiveness, though Freud continues to assert the significant part played by the external authority in the generation of guilt. Freud also maintains his attachment to the phylogenetic thesis which he argues is entirely compatible with these later developments: the remorse that was such a feature of that story is explained by Freud as resulting from the love for the slain primal father.

The part played by love in the origin of guilt is therefore as follows:

Whether one has killed one's father or has abstained from doing so is not really the decisive thing. One is bound to feel guilty in either case, for the sense of guilt is an expression of the conflict due to ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death.

Freud, 1930, p. 132

So the conflict between love and hate at the level of the individual is the playing out of the conflict between the life and death drives and expresses itself as a sense of guilt.

Freud concludes this section by arguing that the co-option of human beings into increasingly large social groups (a prerogative of Eros or the life drive) will reinforce guilt along the same lines as those pertaining to the first experiences with an external authority. Freud calls this ‘. . . the fatal inevitability of the sense of guilt’ (1930, p. 132).

In the final section VIII of *Civilisation and its Discontents* Freud draws together the themes discussed so far and adds some final developments.

Freud discusses the anxiety operating in a sense of guilt and suggests that the range of possible manifestations includes the noisy conscious guilt of obsessional neurotics, the widespread ‘unconscious sense of guilt’ of most neurotics (including some obsessionals) and a variety of limited ‘unconscious guilt’ which is perceived as the ‘*malaise*’ or discomfort in civilisation of the study’s title and which Freud suggests is felt by most (Freud, 1930, pp.135-6).

In a clarification of the terms used in relation to guilt - super-ego, conscience, sense of guilt, need for punishment and remorse<sup>16</sup> - Freud includes this statement,

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<sup>16</sup> This discussion is taken up in Appendix X, where we consider the terms and their translation.

The fear of this critical agency [the super-ego] (a fear which is at the bottom of the whole relationship), the need for punishment, is an instinctual manifestation on the part of the ego, which has become masochistic under the influence of a sadistic super-ego; it is a portion, that is to say, of the instinct towards internal destruction present in the ego, employed for forming an erotic attachment to the super-ego.

Freud, 1930, pp. 136

Freud is here adding a further dimension to this complex relation between the ego and the super-ego. We had already noted the victim stance of the ego in moral masochism from *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924). Here it is specified as an ‘. . . instinct towards internal destruction present in the ego . . .’, reflecting the extension of Freud’s understanding of the death drive’s part in the construction of guilt (Freud, 1930, p. 136). Freud adds that this instinct is ‘. . . employed for forming an erotic attachment to the super-ego’ (p. 136). This seems to add a further, and very interesting, dimension to the relation between the ego and the super-ego. Unfortunately Freud says no more about it. It will therefore be an issue for further consideration in our analysis in chapter 5.

Freud makes two further points worthy of attention in this last chapter.

First, and very importantly for the theory of the drives and of guilt, Freud argues that an increase in the sense of guilt should be considered to be a result of the renunciation of the aggressive drives only and not as previously suggested a renunciation of both the sexual and aggressive drives. He uses this idea to clarify another. He reminds us that behind neurotic symptoms are

unfulfilled sexual desires. He alludes to the hitherto mysterious clinical finding that an unconscious sense of guilt seems to operate in every neurosis. On the basis of these phenomena and this new emphasis on the aggressive drives only as the source of guilt, Freud is able to put forward a rather neat formula:

When an instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive components into a sense of guilt.

Freud, 1930, p. 139

Second, Freud argues that the similarity between the development of civilisation and the development of the individual can be extended to support the idea that culture evolves a super-ego. When the demands of an individual's super-ego are traced back they seem, at least some of the time, to coincide with those in culture. But the cultural super-ego like the individual super-ego makes the mistake of making demands beyond those capable of being met by the recipient. Freud goes on to suggest that cultural eras might be considered neurotic.<sup>17</sup> He encourages future study into the 'pathology of cultural communities' but his final words on the subject are to offer no hope to social idealists, given his insistence on the reliability of man's primal aggression to guarantee guilt and unhappiness (Freud, 1930, p. 143-4).

It may seem that we have gone into the turns in Freud's thinking in this study in over-elaborate detail. There are three things worth saying about this, which incidentally mirror the problems

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<sup>17</sup> Given the relative ubiquity of neurosis it should not surprise us that whole cultures can be neurotic. An interesting related question concerns the extent to which whole cultures can be psychotic.

Freud is discussing. First of all, the struggle that Freud is having with these ideas is palpable and he frequently notes that more work is needed on these issues. Second, the complexity of the relation between culture and the individual is such that detail and depth are necessary. And third, the processes by which the small human is affected by their environment, as well as being complex, are protracted. Of these, Freud says

. . . in this summary description we have sharply delimited events which in reality occur by gradual transitions . . .

Freud, 1930. P. 125n

These ‘summarised gradual transitions’ are at the heart of our enquiry into guilt and so need to be considered in all their detail.

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, Freud raises a huge number of issues in his thinking about guilt and the question of guilt clearly functions as a spur to theoretical development for him.

We can identify three major moments in his theorisation of guilt. While his first questions about guilt concern the place of self-reproach in the symptomatology of the neuroses his first thesis about guilt makes it a consequence of masturbation – it is guilt for a guilty pleasure.

His second major thesis about guilt links it to the hypothesised murder of the primal father and makes it a crime which is repeated phylogenetically in the recapitulation of murderous wishes against the father in the early life of small children. The child's murderous wishes hark back to and call up from the id, the murderous act of a band of brothers that founds a new level of social life, so that the guilt (and remorse) that result are fuelled by the child's own murderous intentions and the historic crime that remains as part of the stock of an unconscious social memory.

The third major thesis about guilt draws on the ideas of a death drive, its associated inevitable aggression and its playing out in the form of masochism. The thesis is helped by Freud's thinking on melancholia. Here guilt is that which demands, initially, a renunciation of drive satisfaction and then, subsequently, that which is itself fuelled by the renunciation of drive satisfaction. A primal aggression in the shape of the death drive (ultimately unexplained and unexplainable - it can only be inferred and posited), produces the impetus for a prohibition of satisfaction. This prohibition, once installed, creates a kind of centrifugal propulsion that sustains its own spiralling force. Whenever, subsequently, an intended satisfaction, comes into conflict with the prohibiting agency, it produces a tendency towards guilt and the energy that should or could have gone into the pursuit of the satisfaction along with levels of attendant aggression becomes, instead, redirected to the further nourishment of the prohibiting agency. The playing out of this in individual cases will determine the extent to which guilt is felt.

While we have identified three separate theses we need to note that they are not completely new and mutually exclusive theses. Each builds upon the previous one and brings new thinking and new clinical observation into play.

We also need to note that, actually, the problem is much more complex and is only subsumed under these three theses if we remain at a level of comparative superficiality. When we dive below the surface of these arguments we come upon a wide range of clinical and theoretical phenomena that need further study. We have identified the following issues for further analysis:

Differentials in guilt in hysteria and obsessional neurosis and other psychopathologies

The psychical structure of guilt

The relation of fear, fright and anxiety to guilt

The relation of aggression to guilt

The problem of the internalisation of the authority that becomes the super-ego

The place of the 'heard' in the development of the super-ego

The relation of 'civilisation' to guilt

The origin of guilt

While Freud has opened up all of these issues and has furnished us with immense theoretical resources, we can speculate, with some justification, that he would concede that there remains much to be understood in them.

As Freud himself says, though in a slightly different context, 'Here are happenings rich in unsolved riddles! (1933 [1932] p. 61).



## **Chapter 3**

### **Freud's Followers: Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein**

Varied contributions from Freud's early followers take up the question of guilt. It will not be possible to provide a detailed account of all of them in the space available but a general schema of them and some detailed study of the two most significant, Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein will form this chapter. We begin with Freud's inner circle, among whom, Abraham, Ferenczi and Jones have the most notable things to say.

Ferenczi is notable for two strands of thought. On the one hand, his particularly liberal views on sexuality led him to question why masturbation, or a range of other 'perversions' would lead necessarily to guilt. He resolved this in a disjuncture between a pre-genital period characterised by 'tenderness' in which there was no guilt and a post-Oedipal period dominated by 'passion' which was heavily imbued with guilt.

On a somewhat separate note, Ferenczi proposed an element of super-ego development in developing sphincter control which he called 'sphincter morality'.

While Ferenczi's often original ideas were rather sidelined until much later, the ideas of Karl Abraham are important because of their long-term influence on the work of others, most notably, Melanie Klein. It has also been argued that Freud's understanding of melancholia

(and therefore some of his thinking on guilt) owes something to Abraham and in particular to Abraham's ideas about 'hate' and 'ambivalence' (Haynal and Falzeder in Falzeder, 2002).

While Freud had described libidinal stages in his *Three Essays* (1905), Abraham elaborated this into a much more detailed and structured system of stages and sub-stages (Abraham, 1916, 1921 and 1924).

Abraham introduces guilt between the later oral stage (cannibalistic) and the earlier anal-sadistic stage of his taxonomy of stages of libidinal organisation.

In the stage of narcissism with a cannibalistic sexual aim the first evidence of an instinctual inhibition appears in the form of morbid anxiety. The process of overcoming the cannibalistic impulses is intimately associated with a sense of guilt which comes into the foreground as a typical inhibitory phenomenon belonging to the third stage.

Abraham, 1924,

Guilt here is argued to derive from the specific renunciation of 'cannibalistic impulses' and is characterised as a 'morbid anxiety'. While the link with anxiety<sup>1</sup> is prevalent in Freud's ideas, the specification of renunciation in relation to cannibalistic tendencies is not. And we need to clarify what is meant here and how Abraham arrives at this precise argument.

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<sup>1</sup> It is arguable that there are differences in the conceptualisation of anxiety in Freud and Abraham. This will be taken up later when we look at the issue of anxiety in Klein's work.

We will see below that there are significant links between Abraham's ideas and those of Melanie Klein. However, before we look at her work, we need to consider an important paper by Ernest Jones from 1929.

### **Ernest Jones**

Jones had earlier published two papers which link to this one. In 1926 he wrote on the super-ego in *Origin and Structure of the Super-Ego* and in April 1929 he published a paper on anxiety entitled *The Psychopathology of Anxiety*. The paper we will focus on is entitled '*Fear, Guilt and Hate*'. It was originally read at the 11th International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Oxford on July 27th, 1929 and subsequently published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, in October 1929.

Following invitations from Jones and Alix and James Strachey, Melanie Klein had given lectures in England in 1925 and then migrated there in 1926. Some influence from her ideas and her work with children was permeating the work of English analysis at that time and we can see examples in the development of Jones's thinking.

Melanie Klein's influence is evident in this paper, for example, when Jones argues for ' . . . deeper analytic research, particularly into the earliest stages of infantile development' p.384.

The great merit of this paper, for our purposes, is that Jones tries to grapple in a very sustained and deep way with the relations between fear, guilt and hate<sup>2</sup> - which he calls emotional attitudes<sup>3</sup>. Jones argues that each of these can be viewed as functioning in a layer type arrangement in relation to the others. The following tables show the tripartite structure of the relation between them which he argues is very evident from clinical work.

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<sup>2</sup> We need to consider Jones use of these particular terms. While we have drawn attention to the conflation of guilt and a need for punishment in Freud's work we should note that they are both used in this paper. However we need to consider how Jones has chosen to use fear rather than anxiety and hatred rather than aggression. In the case of fear/anxiety, Jones adds a footnote in which he says 'It will be plain that I constantly use the word "fear" in this paper in the clinical sense of anxiety and apprehension, not necessarily in the biological sense of alertness with its appropriate responses.' (Jones, 1929, p.389). Jones does not explain why he uses fear rather than anxiety but it is likely, in part, due to the depth discussion of anxiety that he goes on to have and which complicates how he wishes 'anxiety' to be understood, in part following the thinking of Freud in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926). There is no explanation for using hatred rather than aggression. However, there is some sensitivity on Jones's part, later in the paper, to the question of terminology. He defends his determination to bring in the new Greek term *Aphanisis* with a reference to his usual insistence on using concrete terms. Perhaps, by the use of the more widely understood hatred and fear, Jones is trying to make that point in action.

<sup>3</sup> To talk of 'emotional attitudes' perhaps helps Jones to deal with the potentially difficult problem of locating affects – by considering emotions as emotional attitudes Jones introduces an idea-related dimension to the question of emotions. An attitude is something that can be expressed, a representational content wrapped up in a representational form (that could be opposed to affect, that is, bodily tension of some type but not part of the symbolic world until it is named – even if it is only named as 'a feeling' – it is an issue that Jones speaks about later in the paper in relation to anxiety.)

The relation between **fear** and **guilt** is:

Emotional attitude	Structural relation	Dynamic relation
Conscious (ego-syntonic) <b>fear</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
Unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>guilt</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
A deeper unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>fear</b>		

The relation between **hatred** and **guilt** is:

Emotional attitude	Structural relation	Dynamic relation
Conscious (ego-syntonic) <b>hatred</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
Unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>guilt</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
A deeper unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>hatred</b>		

The relation between **hatred** and **fear** is:

Emotional attitude	Structural relation	Dynamic relation
Conscious (ego-syntonic) <b>hatred</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
Unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>fear</b>	Which masks ↓	Is a reaction to ↓
A deeper unconscious (not ego-syntonic) <b>hatred</b>		

With regard to guilt, we must note two things here. First, guilt is never represented as the final or bottom layer. It is always viewed as a reaction to something else - here, either hatred or fear. Second, conscious guilt is not dealt with in this schema.

In this relatively simple structure the first and third layers are of the same 'emotional attitude', although the first is conscious and the third is deeply unconscious. The middle layer serves to separate the two outer layers and figures guilt in two cases and fear in the other. Hate figures as the bottom layer in two of the cases while in the other, the deepest layer is fear.

Jones acknowledges that this stratification allows us to clarify topographical relations but does not go very far in explaining them. He therefore sets out to examine them more deeply, beginning with hate.

He argues that the rage brought about by frustration of the infant's (principally libidinal) wishes, fused with sadism, fuelled efforts to sadistically overcome the source of the frustration. The sadistic pleasure in this, however, was 'interfered' with by guilt. However, this guilt is then expiated by projecting it outwards onto another person who becomes the focus for the secondary hatred. Jones asks, how can guilt ' . . . be relieved by an exhibition of the very thing, namely hate, which was the generating occasion of the guilt itself.' (Jones, 1929, p. 386) He poses a similar question about guilt when he asks why the patient in analysis provokes a 'punishment' to save himself from a more severe internal self-punishment,

We get three layers very alike to the other sets of three mentioned above: first dread of external punishment (e.g. by the father); then guilt and self-punishment to protect the personality from the outer one, the method of religious penance; and finally, the evoking of external punishment, a disguised form of the original one, so as to protect the personality from the severity of the self-punishing tendencies. The father is invoked to save the person from the thing that saved him from the father!'

Jones, 1929, p.387

Jones refers to the '*isopathic principle*' and to 'vaccine therapy' as metaphors for this sequence in which an illness is 'cured' by giving the patient a small dose of it.<sup>4</sup>

Jones notes a similarity between fear and hate and one that differentiates them from guilt. He argues that people can cope with fear or hatred more easily than they can with guilt and suggests this is evident in fear of criticism. He further argues that the threat to psychical integrity posed by admitting one is really in the wrong is very significant. He suggests that the degree of intolerability to this threat varies with the degree of sadism involved and uses this to support an idea he attributes to Klein, that the super-ego originates in the sadistic stage rather than the phallic stage.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, and following on from the proposal above, Jones tries to consider as separate the two sources of guilt he identified earlier - the first '... a defence against - the primary anxiety of unsatisfied libido ...', the second, sadism. In order to resolve the question of the relative importance of these sources, Jones, like Freud, but in this instance, before him, proposes two stages in the development of guilt. He proposes a first "'pre-nefarious' stage of guilt" associated with the renunciation of libidinal satisfaction and a second stage, complicated by love and a relation to an object which come into conflict with the sadism to produce a 'fully developed guilt'. In a related footnote he states that '... ambivalence is an essential condition of guilt', that is love, as well as hate must be present. (Jones, 1929, p. 388).

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<sup>4</sup> In using the 'vaccine therapy' example Jones follows Freud who uses it in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* which Jones is working with here.

<sup>5</sup> Her idea in turn is evidently influenced by Abraham.



Jones exemplifies these two stages in terms of a hypothesised statement on the part of the infant. In the first renunciation/anxiety stage the 'pre-nefarious' guilt is expressed as "I mustn't because it is intolerable" thereby giving expression to the escape from fear which is dominant. In the second, full guilt stage, the statement is "I shouldn't because it is wrong and dangerous" - in this instance giving expression to something more impersonal, more abstract and more reasoned than in the previous stage. He concludes this discussion by saying that the super-ego is an amalgam of love, fear and hate and that it functions by directing onto the ego, injunctions which the child previously projected outwards.

When it comes to discussing fear, Jones states that the clinical evidence, especially that from infant analysis, supports that anxiety is always found prior to hate and guilt (p. 390). Jones then embarks upon a discussion of anxiety drawn from Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926). He notes Freud's distinction between a primal anxiety and a later 'signal' anxiety generated by the ego as an act of advance protection against an anticipated threat.

Jones equates Freud's 'traumatic situation' associated with primal anxiety with an internal danger and Freud's 'danger situation' associated with signal anxiety with an external danger. It may be helpful here if we clarify that what is being characterised as an external source of danger is the (anticipated) prohibition of or intervention in or interference with libidinal wishes from an outside authority. Jones specifies that the external danger can take two forms for a boy - refused access to the mother which is a direct privation or the threat of castration which is an indirect punishment (and therefore functions by a symbolic equation) - a deprivation. Exactly what is implied here by the difference between a privation and an

indirect deprivation is an issue of colossal proportions for the theory of phallic sexuality and castration but for the moment we need to follow Jones in his theorising. Jones says that the result is the same in either case but then gets on to slippery ground when he argues that 'privation is another name for the original traumatic situation, that of intolerable tension consequent on the blocking of efferent discharge' (Jones, 1929, p. 391).

It is true, although not very helpful, that the term 'privation' can be used to characterise an element of loss in the original trauma situation. It is also true that the original trauma situation is emblematic of 'intolerable tension consequent on the blocking of efferent discharge'. But it does not help the argument to suggest that any or every privation is equal to the original traumatic situation. What is missing from this view is an appreciation of the weakness of the ego in the 'original traumatic situation' which, in part, contributes to its traumatic nature.

Having equated privation (and deprivation) with 'the original traumatic situation' Jones goes on to argue that the fear induced is, ultimately, a fear that the ego will lose its capacity for enjoyment (erotic or otherwise) - forever. Jones suggests this is a threat to the core of the ego's narcissism and that it can be manifested in a fear of impotence, loss of identity, loss of ideals, loss of even sublimated pleasure and therefore a total extinction of the ego's ability to enjoy anything. Jones designates this great danger *aphanisis*. He argues that the fear of it is something that goes well beyond castration fear and that it is also beyond what is understood by the unconscious as a repository for repressed ideational content. The elementary anxiety attaching to the danger of aphanisis he calls, 'pre-ideational primal anxiety' and suggests that it is the dominant anxiety not only of the neo-nate but for the first months of life. We could

liken what he is saying to a description of the fight between the life and death drives - the anxiety of the life drives as they battle to survive the death drive.

Jones next turns his attention to a problem that he rightly calls ‘. . . one of the most obscure in the whole field of psychoanalysis’ (p. 392). The problem concerns how to specify the relationship between this primal anxiety and libidinal privation. He tries to clarify the question,

Is the evidently inhibiting effect of the anxiety in some way a defence against whatever is intolerable, or is it a simple, so to speak mechanical, consequence of over-excitation that is blocked?

And answers,

I believe it is both.

Jones, 1929, p. 393<sup>6</sup>

Jones furnishes us with an explanation for this by reminding us how desperately the ego must try to deal with the traumatic situation. He paints a picture of the ego engaged in frantic vacillation between flight and fight. The flight is represented by attempts to separate the ego

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<sup>6</sup> At this point in his argument Jones employs an example from physiology - the extinction of hunger after a period of abstention from food - and compares this to the extinction of libido following cessation of its deployment. He says, ‘With the libido, however, this would be tantamount to total annihilation of it and all possibility of erotic functioning would be gone, subjectively forever.’ We may be missing some fundamental point here because we are prompted to ask - why? Why, is it not the same for the libido as hunger in that its cessation for a period need not imply its total annihilation - forever?

from excitation and is the basis for primal repression, while the fight attempts methods of dealing with or confronting the excitation which leads to some discharge. Under this general rubric, Jones includes the range of defences and inhibitions, which, he argues, are shown to be sites of limited gratification. Based on these arguments, Jones concludes that,

. . . what the infant finds so intolerable in the primal ‘traumatic’ situation, the danger against which it feels so helpless, is the loss of control in respect of libidinal excitation, its incapacity to relieve it and enjoy the relief of it.

Jones, 1929, p. 394

Jones reminds us of the final logic of this argument by stating that it is not only the secondary ‘signal’ anxiety that is defensive but that *primary anxiety* is defensive in nature too.

Jones draws together his now developed conception of the early and later stages of each of the three - fear, hate and guilt, now in this different order. We can no longer talk of them as ‘emotional attitudes’ because as Jones has shown, what could be construed as attitudinal content is a) not consistent across the early and late stages and b) especially in the case of fear, cannot be described as ‘attitudinal’ at all in the early stage.

Early stage	Later Stage
<p>Pre-ideational primal Anxiety</p> <p>‘primal aphanistic dread arising from the intolerable tension of unrelieved excitation’</p>	<p>‘Signal’ anxiety</p> <p>‘privation has become identified with external frustration’</p>
<p>Hate</p> <p>‘anger at frustration’</p>	<p>Sadism</p> <p>‘from the sexualising of the hate impulse’</p>
<p>Pre-nefarious guilt</p> <p>an ‘ . . . inhibition . . . to assist the early fear reaction’</p>	<p>Guilt proper</p> <p>‘to protect against the external dangers’</p>

Derived from Jones, 1929, p.395

While Jones has brought us to a point where we can theorise more effectively about anxiety, in particular, and the mechanisms operating in relation to primal trauma, he leaves us here with further questions about guilt - which in the above table, is less satisfactorily explained than the other two reactions.

Jones juxtaposes the problematic reaction of hate/sadism to the inhibition included in both fear and guilt. While this inhibition is viewed as a forerunner to the renunciation that can deflect libido into other satisfactions, the hate/sadism response is both socially and pathologically disastrous.

Jones returns to the question of the point at which the internal trauma becomes externalised and the experience of privation becomes linked with an external frustrator. Jones rightly designates this, 'the critical point in the whole development'(p.395).

In this development, Jones sees an advantage to the child in harnessing the assistance of the external authority to combat the dangers posed by the internal threat. He argues that the option to magnify the danger from outside allows the child to move some of the threat from inside and attach it to the threat from outside - which has, at least, the virtue that it can be appealed to and possibly manipulated. The new form of difficulty - the danger which has not gone away but returns in a different guise - is met by a 'phantasised strict parent' and the attendant development of the super-ego. Now Jones is able to claim a positive relation between the degree of primal anxiety and the use of a strict parent imago. Here then is an

explanation for the severity of the super-ego in children whose parents seem relatively benign. But Jones makes this a general economic principle by showing that the strength of the first reaction will be mirrored in the second and gives as an example the additional guilt that will be required in response to an excess of earlier sadism.

Jones supports his earlier call for more research into the earliest period of infancy by pointing out that the period prior to the drafting in of the external objects functions as a pre-history to the later period and, indeed, an influential one.

Jones returns to his initial tripartite stratification - elaborated above in the three tables early in our discussion of his paper. He now clarifies further that these three - fear, guilt and hate - function as a triumvirate that can replace one another when the going gets tough. Wherever the primary fear, guilt or hate becomes 'unendurable', a secondary fear, guilt or hate can come to its rescue and take its place. This means of coping is, Jones says, a regression and therefore always a defence.

He also reminds us that each of these attitudes is capable of being sexualised - in the case of fear and guilt in the form of masochism, in the case of hate in terms of sadism.

In his penultimate discussion, Jones reminds us that in using fear, guilt or hate to cope with the primal trauma situation the infant must find a way to sustain a sufficient degree of libidinal tension without finding itself overwhelmed by it. He goes on to say that the probable

sequence of events is that the infant opts first for inhibition but that, following its failure, he chooses the defensive reactions of fear, guilt or hate. Both routes pose problems. Inhibition incorporates a loss of control over his disturbing wishes while an excess of fear, guilt and hate will lead to neurosis.

Finally, in relation to clinical matters, Jones discusses the core difficulty for neurotics deriving from never having mastered the inhibiting tendency which is at the heart of guilt and that, because of that, they are *only* able to control their impulses by recourse to guilt. ‘Artificial aphanisis’ is therefore a constant danger - ‘The very thing in which he originally sought salvation has become his greatest danger’ (p. 397). In working with these patients he finds that they lack confidence ‘in the possibility of controlling the originally defensive inhibiting tendency’ (p.397) and concludes by saying, of the patient,

The battle is half won when he realises that there are other than moral reasons for restraining the gratification of an impulse; it is wholly won when he finally realises that this capacity for restraint, instead of being the danger he has always imagined, is, on the contrary, the only thing that will give him what he seeks, secure possession of his personality, particularly of his libidinal potency, together with self-control in the fullest sense of the word.

Jones, 1929, p. 397

We have looked in some detail at Jones’s paper because it is highly condensed, extremely complicated and, in addition, it sits at a juncture between Freud and Klein’s work, in some



instances foreshadowing their developments and in some instances indexing them. We will revisit many of Jones points in our analysis in chapter 5.

## **Melanie Klein**

Melanie Klein's theory of guilt is linked to her theory of sadism and later her ideas on the death instinct derived from Freud's theory and is essentially that guilt results from the phantasised attacks on the object made by the infant which the infant imagines will be visited on him in return in the form of persecution. This view was promulgated by Klein from 1927 but is best expressed in a paper from the late 1940s:

The feeling that the harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses I take to be the essence of guilt . . . The urge to undo or repair this harm results from the feeling that the subject has caused it, i.e. from guilt.

Klein, 1948, p.36

Klein's earliest work with guilt - or guilt anxiety<sup>7</sup> as she called it at that time, was in her analysis of Rita, aged 2 years and 9 months, in 1923 (Klein 1926, 1932, 1945). As Klein reported in 1926:

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<sup>7</sup> Petot undertakes a quantitative analysis of the relative appearance of the words 'anxiety' and 'guilt' in Klein's published work of the 1920s. He shows that in the mid-twenties Klein goes from using 'anxiety' extensively and 'guilt' hardly at all to a completely reversed situation.

As early as her second year, those with whom Rita came into contact were struck by her remorse for every naughtiness, however small, and her hypersensitiveness to any sort of blame. For instance, she burst into tears when her father playfully threatened a bear in a picture-book. Here, what determined her identification with the bear was her fear of blame from her *real* father.

Klein, 1926, p.132 (Klein's emphasis)

Here Klein introduces the idea that guilt is to be seen much earlier than Freud had posited. Freud had located guilt as proceeding from the super-ego which in turn emerged from the castration and Oedipus complexes, which he had located as occurring between ages 3 and 6. At the time of Rita's analysis, Klein located the origin of her super-ego to her second year. Later she would suggest that it would have been even earlier:

The anxieties and feelings of guilt . . . were bound up with Rita's super-ego development. I found in her a cruel and unrelenting super-ego, such as underlies severe obsessional neurosis in adults. This development I could in the analysis trace back definitely to the beginning of her second year. In the light of my later experience I am bound to conclude that the beginnings of Rita's super-ego reached back to the first few months of life.

Klein, 1945, p. 402

We can note in passing that Klein, like Freud, links guilt with obsessional neurosis though it is unclear upon what basis she makes this diagnosis, other than with reference to guilt and the super-ego (hence somewhat tautological) although there are also references to Rita's ritualistic play - which may have been used as an indicator.

If we return to the 1932 quote above we can also note for the moment that Klein has highlighted ‘remorse’ and a ‘hyper-sensitiveness to any sort of blame’<sup>8</sup>. Rita burst into tears at a symbolic threat and Klein goes on to characterise this as a ‘fear of blame’. We should note here, again, how closely *fear* is connected to guilt.

Klein continues:

Again, her inhibition in play proceeded from her sense of guilt. When she was two and a quarter she repeatedly declared, when playing with her doll . . . that she was not the baby-doll’s mother. Analysis showed that she did not *dare* to play at being the mother because the baby-doll stood to her amongst other things for the little brother whom she had wanted to take away from her mother, even during the pregnancy.

Klein, 1926, p.132 (Klein’s emphasis)

Rita does not ‘*dare*’ play at being mother. Klein states that this inhibition derives from guilt but we should note in passing again how *fear* seems to play a central role.

Klein emphasises the importance of fear in her first session with Rita:

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<sup>8</sup> The similarity of this phrase to some used by Freud in his discussion of the Emmy von N case seems worth noting. Emmy was ‘liable to blame herself severely’ and had a ‘morally over-sensitive personality’ Breuer and Freud, 1895, p. 122.

. . . I concluded that she was particularly afraid of something which I might do to her when she was alone with me in the room. I interpreted this and, referring to her night terrors, I linked her suspicion of me as a hostile stranger with her fear that a bad woman would attack her when she was by herself at night.

Klein, 1955, p.124

We will note in passing these emphases on fear as we will wish to link it later to points in the work of Freud and Jones where guilt and fear are connected.

Petot points out that the beginning of all Klein's analyses are characterised by the interpretation of anxiety linked to a fantasy (Petot, p. 135). A key issue for Klein is the origin of anxiety in aggressive impulses, not libidinal ones. Klein put forward her formal thesis that guilt originates from the turning round upon the self of aggressive impulses in 1932 but it is clear from her earlier work, including that with Rita, that she holds this view from much earlier. A key element in the Rita case concerns the theorisation of guilt. Until the Rita case, Klein thought that anxiety was affect derived from repressed libido, following the Rita case she understands anxiety as guilt arising from the tension generated between the ego and the embryonic super-ego.

Some important issues in the psychological sequencing of aggression and guilt arise over the question of weaning. Rita had been breast-fed for a few months and was then moved on to bottle-feeding which ' . . . she had at first been unwilling to accept. . . ' (1945, p.398). We see

here then the first significant privation at a 'few months' old and we might reasonably ask if there is a direct link between this privation and the origin of the super-ego, which as we have seen above, Klein asserts, occurs in 'the first few months of life' (1945, p. 402). This is not Klein's view - her idea of guilt and the super-ego requires the intervention of the child's aggressive wishes. Weaning from the bottle on to solid food had also been difficult and had not been fully achieved when Rita began analysis with Klein. Klein's view of the sequence of events is clearly, if rather curiously, expressed:

Her analysis revealed that the weaning represented a cruel punishment for her aggressive desires and death wishes against her mother.

Klein, 1945, p.404

This sequencing posits aggressive desires and death wishes as the cause of the 'cruel punishment' of weaning. As a sequence this works if we only consider the later stages of weaning. If we consider the earlier stages of weaning we have two options: either the aggressive desires and death wishes predate the earliest weaning or the privation of weaning is seen in some way as a punishment and the aggressive desires and death wishes are retrogressively identified as a 'cause'. This latter view is perhaps given some support by referring to other elements in the case. In the sentence which immediately precedes the quote above Klein says that in response to attempts to wean her off the last bottle:

[Rita] fell into a state of despair; she lost her appetite in general, refused food, clung more than ever to her mother, asking her again and again whether she loved her, *if she had been naughty*, and so on.

Klein, 1945, p.404 (My emphasis)

What does this indicate if not a problem of knowledge and logic for Rita. She is to be subject to a privation. Her response to this is, among other things, to construe a privation as a punishment and therefore to engage in a search for a reason for being punished - 'had she been naughty?' Elsewhere in the case Klein comments that Rita constantly asks 'Am I good?' which is of course another way of asking if she has been or is naughty - and, therefore, in need of punishment.

The detail provided by Klein of the Rita case will be examined more closely in our analysis in Chapter 5 and comparison made with Freud's Rat Man case.

It was while working with Rita that Klein developed her play technique and introduced her major theoretical revisions of Freud - namely that the Oedipus complex and the super-ego developed much earlier than understood by Freud, were consequent upon weaning and that aggressive impulses were extremely important in their onset and development. It was with the analyses of Trude, Ruth and Peter in 1924/5 that Klein moved from discussion of aggressive impulses to that of oral, urethral and anal sadism on the part of the child as the key element in the origin of guilt and the super-ego. Her ideas on the development of the super ego at this time are elaborated in the paper she gave at the *Symposium on Child Analysis* in 1927.

In a dispute with Anna Freud, she argued that children as young as three suffer severe internal conflicts precisely because ' . . . they are so much the products of civilization . . . ' (1927, p.154). She points out that while children of this age are more dependent on external

objects than adults there is not an equivalence between the external objects and the harsh super ego which is 'already developed' in them. She says,

It is only thus that we can explain the astonishing fact that in children of three, four or five years old we encounter a super-ego of a severity which is often in the sharpest contradiction to the real love-objects, the parents.

Klein, 1927, p. 155

She illustrates this point with reference to the case of a four year old boy. She argues that his parents are unusually kind and loving and do not punish or threaten him. However, he has the severest conflicts operating between his ego and super-ego. Her explanation for this, at this time, is that,

On account of the well-known formula which prevails in the Ucs this child anticipates, by reason of his own cannibalistic and sadistic impulses, such punishments as castration, being cut to pieces, eaten up, etc., and lives in perpetual dread of them.

Klein, 1927, p.155

Here we can see that it is the child's own sadism which fuels his fear and dread of threatening introjected objects who stand in 'grotesque' contrast to the real parents. What is not clear in this statement is the mechanics of this situation. Does the child fear that his sadism will be

avenged by his introjected objects in the form of punishments or does the energy of his own impulses threaten him directly? The further elaboration of this comes later.

In the very next paragraph Klein begins by saying that the formation of the super-ego derives from identifications. However, what she has said in her previous paragraph, outlined above, puts in question, the operation of identification. She has already drawn a distinction between identification with the 'real' benign parents and the introjection of 'grotesque' and threatening caricatures. This is a point of investigation that we will take up further in our analysis in chapter 5 as it gets close to the heart of our attempts to gain greater understanding of the origin of guilt.

Klein follows this with a discussion of the wide range of identifications she finds in these young children and an appeal for the full range of Oedipal relations, identifications and conflicts to be analysed. These ideas emerge out of a serious disagreement between Klein and Anna Freud about the nature of children's super-egos and, directly related to that, the strategy that needs to be adopted by the analyst in working with children.<sup>9</sup> Anna Freud had argued that the relative weakness of the child's super-ego needed to be strengthened by the analyst/educator. (Freud, A.,1927) Klein, very much to the contrary, argued that the terrible anxiety and guilt associated with the harsh and powerful super-ego of small children was precisely what must be analysed and thereby reduced.

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<sup>9</sup> This dispute also dealt with the age at which children could or ought to be analysed. Klein was in favour of children as young as 2, Anna Freud, believing the work of analysis was to undo and fix 'education' argued for work with older children. This problem was intimately linked to the different conceptions of children and their development, and of the purpose of analysis, held by Anna Freud and Melanie Klein.



In the early nineteen-thirties Klein moves from looking solely at sadism to looking at the interplay of love and hate and this move results from her acceptance of Freud's ideas on the death and life drives. However, while she has, up to this point, continued to link the development of the super-ego with the development of the Oedipus complex, she now moves away from this.<sup>10</sup>

By 1935, Klein has developed a fuller theory of guilt based on a more developed understanding of the super-ego and its relations to her 'depressive position'. Now the place of love and its corollary 'reparation' figure in the theory of guilt. Klein also moves the whole plot of the super-ego development earlier, saying that the earliest incorporated objects are implicated in its derivation and contribute to its structure (1935, p. 267).

The various attitudes toward and between 'good' and 'bad' objects and the persecutions and demands felt to come from them, by the infant's ego, can account, Klein argues, for the persecutory and harsh character of the super-ego in melancholia. These object relations are experienced by the ego as,

. . . being a prey to contradictory and impossible claims from within, a condition which is felt as bad conscience. That is to say: the earliest utterances of conscience are associated with persecution by bad objects.

Klein, 1935, p. 268

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that in the lead up to this point, Klein's location of the development of the super-ego in relation to the Oedipus complex has moved around quite a bit. She variously puts it before, during and after.

The child introjects objects beginning with the mother's breast. In as much as the breast satisfies it is a 'good' object, in as much as it does not, it is a 'bad' object. The child projects its own aggression on to these objects and they therefore become 'bad'. There is, at the very least, a doubling of 'badness' here and possibly some real confusion. Klein goes on to characterise these bad objects

. . . the child conceives of them as actually dangerous - persecutors who it fears will devour it, scoop out the inside of its body, cut it to pieces, poison it - in short, compassing its destruction by all the means which sadism can devise.

Klein, 1935, p. 262

Previously Klein would have stopped here with a theory of the sadistic origin of the super-ego. Now Klein brings into play, the other side of the ambivalence coin. The love for the good object now plays a part in a complex development of protective, restorative and reparative moves by the child to try to support the good object and fend off the excesses of the bad object.

The child must work its way through its hatred of the bad object and its love (which might mean devouring) of the good object while these objects are kept separated. However, the developing integration of the good and bad objects into a whole object is a necessary precursor for the loss of the object. This coming together of the part-objects into a whole

object is an occurrence of danger for the child as the aggression associated with the attacks on (and by) the bad object become mixed up with the relation to the good object and the threat of its loss. It is in this connection, in particular, that the child will attempt to instigate reparative measures for the good object (now part of a whole object). The remorse, sorrow, regret and despair - the depressiveness - that is felt on behalf of the good object produces the guilt anxiety. The guilt is guilt for the aggressive attacks on the bad object which is now known to be part of the whole object.

In the *Controversial Discussions* of the British Psycho-Analytical Society during the Second World War Klein modified her view that guilt was, as described above, experienced first in relation to the whole object in the depressive position. She now believed she could detect guilt in a transient way in the earlier paranoid position. This is discussed further in her 1948 paper, *On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt*.

Klein further develops her theories of the playing out of the death and life instincts in her study of *Envy and Gratitude* from 1957. She demonstrates the destructive force of envy and the reparative gain from developing a capacity for gratitude. She shows that a particular type of early guilt can be linked to envy,

It appears that one of the consequences of excessive envy is an early onset of guilt. If premature guilt is experienced by an ego not yet capable of bearing it, guilt is felt as a persecution and the object that rouses guilt is turned into a persecutor.

Klein, 1957, p. 194

The problem here, suggests Klein, is that in the stage of paranoid anxiety, the ego is not as well equipped to deal with the persecutory guilt as it would be in the depressive position. In addition, the burden imposed by the persecutory guilt may in itself, hinder the onset of the depressive position.

Melanie Klein's last significant contribution to the discussion of guilt is in her 1958 paper *On the development of Mental Functioning*. Previous to this paper, and as we have seen, Klein brought together the terrifying persecutory objects of infantile phantasy and the elementary super-ego. Thus the severe super-ego of young children was a conglomerate of incorporated objects distorted with the child's own aggressive impulses. After sustaining this view through a variety of developments for over thirty years, Klein made a late about turn and disaggregated the super-ego and the harsh objects. This new thinking opens up a number of questions so we will quote from her in some detail,

When at the beginning of the twenties I embarked on the new venture of analysing by play technique children from their third year onwards, one of the unexpected phenomena I came across was a very early and savage super-ego. I also found that young children introject their parents - first of all the mother and her breast - in a phantastic way, and I was led to this conclusion by observing the terrifying character of some of their internalized objects. These extremely dangerous objects give rise, in early infancy, to conflict and anxiety within the ego; but under the stress of acute anxiety they, and other terrifying figures, are split off in a manner different from that by which the super-ego is formed, and are relegated to the deeper layers of the unconscious. The difference in these two ways of splitting - and this may perhaps throw light on the many as yet obscure ways in which splitting processes take place - is that in the splitting-off of frightening figures defusion seems to be in the ascendancy; whereas super-ego formation is carried out with a predominance of fusion of the two instincts. Therefore the super-ego is normally established

in close relation with the ego and shares different aspects of the same good object. This makes it possible for the ego to integrate and accept the super-ego to a greater or less extent. In contrast, the extremely bad figures are not accepted by the ego in this way and are constantly rejected by it.

Klein, 1958,

So at this late stage in her life and work, Klein is separating the terrifying incorporated objects from the super-ego. We will need to look very carefully at what she is arguing here to understand the implications for her theory of guilt. On the one hand we need to consider the formation of the super-ego if it is divorced from the early objects while on the other, we need to understand the ramifications of the fusion and defusion of instincts which she implicates in the different forms of splitting she discusses.

Klein had argued that the super ego is severe in its early stages and later this severity is mitigated so that the developing child gains a super ego that is less punitive. This early severity is referred to by Freud in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) and Freud refers to Melanie Klein in support of this observation (p. 323n).

However, we may gain some mileage by recalling that in this same paper Freud had explicitly argued that there are two main stages in the development of guilt. An early stage characterised by what Freud calls 'social anxiety' and being a fear of external authority and being found out by it and a second stage characterised by guilt and only arising after the internalisation of the super-ego. This leaves us with a specific question about the relation of Klein's early super-ego and Freud's 'social anxiety'. To what extent is she describing what

Freud subsumes under 'social anxiety' as the operation of the super-ego? Or, alternatively, is she finding viable evidence of a super-ego operating, as she claims, from much earlier? To this mix we also need to add Jones's two stages of pre-nefarious guilt and fully developed guilt.

Freud refers to Klein for a second time in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (p. 332n). This time he refers to several people and unlike in his earlier reference to Klein, where he agrees with her view, here he distances himself from an argument promulgated by her and the others (Ernest Jones, Susan Isaacs and Klein along with, more tentatively, Theodor Reik and Franz Alexander). The argument favoured by them is that ' . . . any kind of frustration, any thwarted instinctual satisfaction, results, or may result, in a heightening of the sense of guilt' (Freud, 1930, p.332-3). This is where Freud argues that this only applies to the *aggressive* instincts, and where he himself moves away from an earlier position in which he had argued that both the sexual and aggressive instincts were implicated.

The two big questions which we are left with following our consideration of the work of Freud's followers so far, and especially that of Jones and Klein are

How do we situate guilt in terms of psychical structure. As we have seen this was a key issue for Jones, though it comes up, regularly if somewhat obliquely in Klein's work. Jones study, as we have seen, tries to locate the playing out of aggression, anxiety and guilt and to order them in some kind of sequencing that will account for clinical and other phenomena. The

precise functioning of the super-ego and the two stages of development need to be examined and a detailed comparison of all three key thinkers will be made.

The second question, as ever, continues to be the origin of the sense of guilt. We have seen, in Klein especially, a number of formulations, some building on the previous ones but ultimately inconclusive. On the one hand Klein gives us a great deal of detail in her various thoughts on the development of the ego and the super-ego and the place of the infant's aggression and objects in those scenarios. On the other she is essentially all over the place with - aggression, revenge, love, despair, reparation, - so that we need to ask exactly where does the guilt figure?

Is it the fear of loss of love?

Is it the fear of punishment?

Is it the dread of terrifying imagos?

Is it the return of the aggression projected outwards?

It will not do sufficiently to say that the guilt is occasioned by aggression or love - it still has to be shown why it is guilt. Again, it is not enough to say that the aggression of the child comes back at him - we have to be able to say why, how and especially why it comes back and is experienced as guilt.

We need now to consider other contributors to this debate. Theodor Reik has already been mentioned and indeed is referred to by Freud, Jones and Klein. We will therefore look at his contribution along with some ideas from Jekels and Bergler.

Theodor Reik (1923) provides a charming account of his young son's efforts to understand the 'inner voice' of conscience. In discussing this he provides some interesting ideas on parental prohibitions and the mode of uptake of them in identification, and the failure of identification in paranoia. This early paper accords closely with Freud's theses at that time but an interest in guilt would last throughout Reik's career and he was still wrestling with the problem in 1957. His work indicates the centrality of identification in questions of guilt.

Jekels and Bergler (1952 [1934]) paper on 'Transference and Love' contains some very interesting ideas on guilt.

They begin by responding to a 1905 statement from Freud about the movement of libido and comment,

That the ego relinquishes a part of its libido in favour of an alien ego is anything but a matter of course which would make superfluous enquiry into basic causes; rather it is a miracle which urgently requires explanation. Why does the ego act in this manner? What are its motives? Does it gain advantages by this process - as seems very likely- and if so, what advantages?

Jekels and Bergler, 1934, p. 178



They continue by saying that Freud offers a clue in the idea that the ego directs libido to the object in order to avoid a build up of its own libido but suggest that they need to go further in understanding this. They argue that this problem is one of love. But in order to understand it they will pursue an understanding of the superego.

With regard to the loving and punitive sides of the parents they say,

The superego seems to have made a one-sided selection, to have chosen only the harshness and severity of the parents, their preventive and punitive functions, while their loving care is not taken up and continued by it.

Jekels and Bergler, 1934, p. 180

They argue that the functioning of the ego ideal is continued in the superego. They refer to the 'ever-increasing perfection' demanded by the ego ideal and we might pause to consider that this ever-increasing perfection in itself seems to signal something of an insistence that is rarely remarked upon in the discussion of the superego's insistence.

They argue that the ego ideal functions as a 'neutral zone' between two countries – Freud's Eros and Thanatos. These two drives battle with one another to take control of the neutral ego

ideal. The ensuing struggle between Eros and Thanatos results in instinctual energy being redirected. They continue, saying,

The decisive factor seems to us the presence of a greater outpouring of instinctual energy which the ego is hindered in directing upon objects.

Jekels and Bergler, 1934, p. 184

This greater outpouring is linked by them to the harshness of the superego which they designate the 'daimon' and link to what they describe as the '... anxiety-creating you-must-not part of the superego'. They show how the daimon is linked to guilt.

The non-homogeneity of the ego ideal furthers the strivings of the daimon to an extraordinary degree. It is possible for the daimon to use the ego ideal and its neutral energy as a sort of silent example which is constantly held up to the intimidated ego, thus giving rise to feelings of guilt; thus it happens that the persons of the environment who have been incorporated into the ego ideal turn out to be uncertain allies of the ego. They attack the ego behind its back, and become indirectly helpers of Thanatos in that they alleviate the aggression of the ego and are themselves full of contradictions - an echo of the inconsistency of all upbringing. This explains why the daimon can dictate the most contradictory and therefore entirely unachievable demands to the ego. On the one hand, the daimon is opposed to every object cathexis because this conducting-off of aggression relieves the ego; on the other hand, it urges the ego toward object cathexis, in constantly holding up to it the silent example of the ego ideal which also is a residue of objects; finally the daimon also turns against the self-sufficient narcissism as an expression of Eros.

Jekels and Bergler, 1934, pp. 185-186

Having used Freud's idea of the movement of libido from the ego to objects and pursued this economic line of reasoning they are able to show that love and guilt are bound together in a kind of inverse relation while anxiety's relation to guilt is more direct.

They say, 'Guilt feelings are a motive for love in adults just as anxiety is in children'. While their paper is principally about transference and its comparison with love, we will want to consider their ideas about the daimon, and the relations between guilt, love and anxiety later. While other theorists make tangential associations between guilt and love, Jekels and Bergler make a specific and very interesting claim. While love is not foregrounded in the themes and analysis we will consider, the curious coupling of it with guilt here may provide a clue for our later discussion.

## Chapter 4

### Lacan on Guilt

I am proposing to examine Lacan's ideas on guilt by focussing on key moments in his work. There are several reasons for doing this. First Lacan's work is very extensive and it would be impossible to detail every twist and turn in his development without replicating his own voluminous output. Second, the majority of Lacan's ideas were transmitted via spoken seminar presentations in French. Of the twenty-seven yearly seminars, less than half of these are available as transcriptions in French and an even smaller number in English translation.<sup>1</sup> There are therefore widely acknowledged aporia in access to Lacan's teaching. Third the intellectual sophistication of Lacan's work makes it very difficult to render into succinct argument so that I propose to take what seem to be key moments in his work and try to deal with them in depth rather than to try to deal with the entire oeuvre.

The moments I am proposing to deal with, and the reasons for the choice are as follows:

#### Moment 1.

The early 1950s. This was the period during which Lacan delivered his ground-breaking 'Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' also known as 'The Rome Discourse' (1953). It was also the period during which he embarked upon his teaching in a yearly seminar that would continue for the next 27 years. It was the period most decisively marked by what came to be known as Lacan's 'Return to Freud'. Lacan

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible to obtain unpublished copies of most of Lacan's seminars.

arrived at this point via training in psychiatry, collaboration with aesthetes, poets, artists and activists in the surrealist movement, intensive scrutiny of Hegelian philosophy, debates with phenomenology and existentialism, interests in structural linguistics, structural anthropology and mathematics, his work in psychoanalysis before, during and after the second world war, the last characterised by disputes within the French psychoanalytic establishment, many of them with Lacan at the centre, encounters with English psychiatry including group analysis and, of course, a very close reading of Freud and the first generation of psychoanalysts. This period is of particular interest in the study of guilt because it brings together Lacan's important early work on the genesis of the ego and his emphasis on the centrality of speech for psychoanalysis. It introduces the idea of the signifier, derived from Saussurian linguistics, and arguably the core concept of Lacan's work and a concept that endures throughout his regularly revised thinking.

## Moment 2

This the period around the early nineteen-sixties. It runs, roughly from the 1959-60 seminar on Ethics to the 1963-4 seminar on The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. It was during this period that Lacan really developed what came to be regarded as his main conceptual apparatus, his ideas, rather than Freud's. These include his 'invention' of the 'object a', his elaborations of desire and *jouissance* and the development of a range of frameworks, graphs and schemas and associated algebraic notation. Here the interest for guilt lies first of all in the explicit discussion of it in the Ethics seminar but also in the elaborations of love, deception and anxiety and how they relate to desire and *jouissance*, in other work of this period.

### Moment 3

This period centres on the famed twentieth seminar of 1972-3 'Encore'. It is not a moment characterised by an explicit interest in guilt but rather one in which Lacan further develops his ideas and in particular his long-standing interest in topology. In approaching this moment in Lacan's work we will be concerned principally to see in what way the formulations of this period impact upon guilt.

This artificially imposed template of 3 moments should not be taken as indicating decisive breaks in Lacan's work. While it is clear that Lacan makes significant changes in the course of his work, it is also clear that there are themes and concerns that run through most or all of his work. These three 'moments' are no more than heuristic constructions designed to provide some access to a substantial, shifting and very difficult body of work.

Before properly embarking upon an examination of the key moments in Lacan's work we need to pave the way by providing some introduction to them.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Lacan reaches the nineteen-fifties with a wealth of influences and experience. It is not our intention here to get involved in the various debates about the relative importance of a range of Lacan's intellectual forebears, nor to try to assess the myriad claims about his intellectual development. Inevitably, some of his main intellectual trajectories will be touched upon, but that will be incidental rather than core. The key concern will be dealing with Lacan's ideas as they relate to the problem of guilt and as they relate to his psychoanalytic pre-decessors on the subject.

As is widely known Lacan's earliest researches were in paranoia, based on his clinical work with the patient *Aimee* (1932). Lacan developed a thesis about the structure of personality based on lessons he gleaned from the careful examination of his patient's paranoid pathology. This interest in 'personality' led on to examination of the construction of the ego and Lacan's theory of the mirror-phase first aired in 1936 (1937). This work formed the basis for a theory of the ego derived from externally generated images and the necessary alienation of an ego based on relations with other/s. The interplay of relations to others and images and the attempt to develop and live with an ego produced, for Lacan, a register of human existence which he later called the Imaginary. It was this particular dimension of Lacan's thinking that put him at odds with the dominant trends in the International Psychoanalytic Movement during the 1940s. Anna Freud's followers were concerned with supporting the ego in relation to its defences. Lacan was more concerned to demonstrate the non-centrality of the ego to human subjectivity. Given that Freud had located guilt in the relations between the ego and the ego-ideal and super-ego we will be interested in Lacan's theory of the ego and the Imaginary. Lacan reworked these in tandem with the development of his ideas on the Symbolic register that is core to the next section.

### **Moment 1.**

In *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* (1953) Lacan engages in a number of important tasks. He, first and foremost, as his title suggests, restates the centrality of speech for psychoanalysis and emphasises the linguistic basis of the subject and the unconscious. He continues and develops his critiques of ego psychology, object relations and the analysis of resistances. In the course of these critiques he also criticises naive

psychologies and the epistemological dead-ends which he argues have led to a dilution of and attack on the fundamentals of psychoanalysis. These tasks constitute Lacan's main project/s in this decisive study. However, in the course of this work he also touches on a wide range of other problems of metapsychology, psychopathology and analytic practice. Guilt is not dealt with explicitly in this work but nevertheless we can extract a number of points that have a bearing upon it.

First of all, Lacan criticises the 'frustration, regression, aggressivity' narrative beloved of both ego-psychology and object relations theorists (Lacan, 1953, p. 41). This is a point Lacan returns to repeatedly in his critique of the superficial idea of the ego of these schools. We will bear this point in mind because it is a key point in establishing Lacan's distance from the theories of guilt proposed by ego-psychology and object relations theory.

A key element in Lacan's argument's about the specificity of the symbolic world of human culture concerns deception (p. 43). (He is engaged in current debates about language and communication, and in particular, claims about animal 'communication', which he argues is not symbolic communication.) The ramifications of deception in psychoanalysis touch on a wide range of issues including the nature of affects and we will link this issue to guilt at a later stage.

From the point of view of apprehending guilt, the section of this text that is most important is Part 2 sub-titled *Symbol and language as structure and limit of the psychoanalytic field*. Crucial issues dealt with here concern 'the law', the 'gift' and Lacan's understanding of the Oedipus complex. Entry into the Symbolic order introduces the law and the 'name of the



father'. At this point, Lacan relies upon Levi-Straussian structuralism to elaborate kinship exchange regulations and link them with a symbolic debt:

The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely its subjective pivot . . . This law, then, is revealed clearly enough as identical with an order of language.

Lacan, 1953, p. 66

While the question of a universal symbolic debt is implicated here, the question of a specific debt is the focus of a discussion of the Rat Man case in Part 3 of this text. Here, Lacan makes a number of important references to the case of the Rat Man. While the question of guilt, central to the case, is not dealt with directly, the question of the super-ego and the Rat Man's 'debt' (symbolic for the Rat Man, 'real' for his father) is. An examination of Lacan's comments on this case will be undertaken to examine what light might be thrown on the question of guilt by Lacan's astute observations on the case. This will be looked at in detail in our analysis in chapter 5.

A second text of this period is Lacan's *Seminar I : Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953-4) which focusses on resistance, speech and the symbolic.

Here, once again, Lacan takes issue with the conception of the ego and the focus on the analysis of resistances which characterise ego psychology and object relations and distances himself from these positions by stating, ' . . . the ego is structured exactly like a symptom.' (Lacan, 1953-4, p. 16)

He argues this point further, a little later,

. . . this resistance, where does it come from? We've seen that none of the texts in the *Studien über Hysterie* allow one to suppose that, as such, it comes from the ego. Nor does anything in the *Traumdeutung* indicate that it comes from the secondary process . . . When we get to the years around 1915 when Freud published *Die Verdrängung* . . . resistance is indeed conceived as something produced on the side of consciousness, but whose identity is essentially determined by its distance, *Entfernung*, from what was originally repressed. The relation then of resistance to the contents of the unconscious itself is in this instance still extremely tangible.

Lacan, 1953-4, p. 34

Lacan refers at this point to Freud's understanding of trauma and its place in the case of the Wolf Man - the crucial discussion of time, memory and history which serves to underline that a certain development has to take place for the Wolf Man to recognise (actually to cognise) something and to instate it as part of his subjectivity. As we have seen, in the previous two chapters, the 'trauma' and its understanding is central to the theorisation of guilt. Where Jones and Klein have moved this primal trauma back to the earliest period, Lacan is reiterating Freud's insistence on the reworking of the primal trauma in the castration complex.

Lacan follows this with a discussion of judgement and 'presence' (of the analyst) based on an examination of Freud's *Negation* (1925), which has a bearing on the question of guilt. This involves Lacan's student Jean Hyppolite in providing a commentary on Freud's paper, which in turn is commented upon by Lacan.

Hyppolite refers to the example of negation given by Freud of a patient who says ‘Now you’ll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I’ve no such intention.’ Freud says that this is ‘. . . a repudiation, by projection, of an idea that has just come up.’ (Freud, 1925, p. 437 )

What is the ‘projection’ referred to here - is it in the ‘you’ll think’? We have two mechanisms - I repudiate the idea which has just come up AND I give you the job of thinking it insulting - how significant is this second mechanism? We have seen that the mechanism of projection is implicated in the theories of guilt of Freud, Jones and Klein. We will need to consider how much projection like that described in relation to negation equates to that discussed in relation to guilt. To what extent is it a case of I attribute to the Other the judgement on my action?

Freud goes on to talk about this by saying ‘It is as though the patient had said: “It’s true that my mother came into my mind as I thought of this person, but I don’t feel inclined to let the association count.”’ and continues by linking negation to judgement, ‘. . . to affirm or negate the content of thoughts is the task of the function of intellectual judgement’ and this leads us to ‘the psychological origin of that function’ (Freud, 1925, p. 438)

Freud continues by saying that, ‘A negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression’ (p. 438) This leads us to at least two questions. What is the significance of ‘intellectual’ here and separately, what is a positive judgement? Lacan’s uses this commentary to elucidate the question of the analyst’s ‘presence’ in his critique of Margaret Little and other object relations theorists (Lacan, 1953-4, pp. 38-56).

Judgement is stated to have two forms and is discussed in very either/or terms. Again we might ask, what about discrimination/gradation, doubt and intellectual ambivalence/indecision? Judgement is argued to be concerned with two sorts of decisions: attribution and existence. While all decisions could be argued to be judgements, all decisions are not about attribution and existence. The issue of the parameters of judgement is important in the discussion of guilt and its institution and will be considered in our final chapter 6.

In Session 8 of Lacan's seminar he sets out to look at the super-ego and uses Rosine Lefort's case of a badly neglected little boy, Robert, as an example. Rosine Lefort gave a case presentation which is included in the text of the seminar. She describes the boy's known history, one of repeated abandonment by his psychotic mother and hospitalisation until he came under her treatment at three and a half years old. Lefort evaluates his condition as mixing hyperactivity and agitation with fewer spells of withdrawal, 'language' consisting of only two words, frequent screaming and odd laughter. His two words were 'Miss!' and 'Wolf!' and she called him the 'Wolf Child' as she said '... that really was the image he had of himself' (Lefort in Lacan, 1953-4, pp. 91-100). She goes on to describe her early work with him, which was characterised by his shocking destructiveness, of others and himself, and great fear. She continues by showing how he moves from destructiveness towards the image of himself as Wolf to making Lefort take the place of the Wolf and being highly destructive towards her - until he finally shut her out as the repository of badness and she had to return and console him - this producing a complete change in his behaviour for the better. Lefort describes this stage in the treatment,

*‘Driven by the past, he had to be aggressive towards me, and yet, at the same time, in the present I was the one he needed. I had to reassure him by my interpretations, speak to him about the past which was forcing him to be aggressive, and assure him that it wouldn’t cause me to disappear, nor shift him from where he was, something he always took as a punishment.’*

Lefort in Lacan, 1953-4, p. 96

She continues by showing the interplay of aggressivity and self-punishment he engages in as he works his way through the establishment of a body-ego, his enjoyment of oral pleasure and the establishment of a separate identity - ‘Robert’ as opposed to ‘Not-Robert’ - someone else.

Following Mme Lefort’s presentation there is discussion of the significance of the ‘Wolf!’ term. Mme Lefort is unable to locate the specific origin of this in Robert’s case and falls back on general use of it by nurses or child-carers. Lacan responds by invoking what he calls ‘... the mythical, folkloric, religious, primitive plane’ and then directs attention to the distinction between the super-ego which he characterises as ‘constraining’ and the ego-ideal, characterised as ‘exalting’ (Lacan, 1953-4, p. 102).<sup>2</sup>

Lacan points to the importance of recognising that the ego ideal and the super-ego pursue different directions in the personality and that the dynamic between them should be thought of as a dialectic.

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that this is a point emphasised by Rudolf Löewenstein in a paper from 1966.

In a veiled reference to James Strachey's paper on *The Nature of the Therapeutic Action* (1934), Lacan, castigates the blurring of the ego ideal and the super-ego in his discussion of the use of the analyst as a locus for both. In Lacan's own efforts to separate the two, he states categorically that, unlike the ego-ideal, which, we must assume, is, at least in part, to be understood as located on the imaginary plane, the ' . . . super-ego is essentially located within the symbolic plane of speech' (Lacan, 1953-4, p. 102).

Lacan leaves aside, for the moment, the question of the ego ideal but has a number of important comments to make on the super-ego. He takes up the issue that had exercised Freud, Jones and Klein - namely the surprising severity and harshness of the super-ego.

He begins by describing the super-ego as 'an imperative' (p. 102), which, for us, is of particular interest as it evokes the voice and hearing, and more decisively, for Lacan, speech. Lacan focusses on the two dimensions of an imperative when he draws our attention to its relation to the law ' . . . that is to say with the totality of the system of language . . . ' and its idea of commandment, but the relation to the law is senseless to the point of failing to recognise the law. He evokes its brutality in ' . . . its senseless, blind character, of pure imperativeness and simple tyranny . . . ' (p. 102).

The tyrannical side of the super-ego and its embodiment in the irrational and oppressive morality of the neurotic, is, says Lacan, the reason why, in analysis, we are impelled to understand the operation of the super-ego.

Lacan uses the example from the case of little Robert to help him to specify this dual relation to the law. He says of the super-ego that it is both the law and its destruction and means by this that it is constructed of and manifested essentially in the domain of speech which is stripped down to a pure imperative without meaning - except that it commands. The closest we seem to be able to get to understanding this is in the empty imperative, 'You must' but, Lacan says, it is so elemental that it cannot even be expressed in these terms. It is deprived of meaning, hence its meaninglessness, its senselessness and its blindness.

In Robert's case, the word Wolf! isn't a name for Robert or for someone else. Only later in the case does Robert perform a kind of self-baptism in which he takes his name, Robert, for himself. The word Wolf!, for Robert, is more elemental. While the word is, of course, part of the stock of human words, a linguistic system, for Robert it is not yet functioning as if it has a relation to other words or meanings and it is this reduced form of language that Lacan likens to the imperative of the super-ego.

Lacan says of this dimension of the super-ego,

It is in this sense that the super-ego ends up being identified with only what is most devastating, most fascinating, in the primitive experiences of the subject. It ends up being identified with what I call *the ferocious figure*, with the figures which we can link to primitive traumas the child has suffered, whatever these are.

Lacan, 1953-4, p. 102

As with Freud and his followers (though, possibly more so) Lacan on guilt can only be appreciated via Lacan on the super-ego.

We will reconsider a number of issues in our later analysis. In particular, we will look carefully at the interplay of aggressiveness, fear and punishment in Robert's case, we will follow Lacan's lead in considering the mythic and folkloric as they relate to the cultural representation of ferocious figures, we will examine the nature of this imperative, this linguistically-based super-ego and we will pursue the specificity of the ego ideal and the super-ego, the suggested dialectic between them and their relations to guilt.

Lacan goes on, with the help of his student, Serge Leclaire, to discuss Freud's 'On Narcissism', which, as we have seen, is pivotal in Freud's work with regard to the ego, the seeing/observing agency, the ego ideal and, in embryo, the super-ego. Following discussion of the misrecognising dimension of the ego, they go on to consider the ego-ideal.

Leclaire says, of Freud, 'To me, it seems singularly important that, in this, his first way of introducing the super-ego, he says that this agency does not exist, that one will not discover it, but can only pre-suppose it'. Lacan criticises Leclaire's understanding by saying:

That is not quite the intended meaning. Freud says that, if such an agency exists, it is not possible that it is the sort of thing that we would not yet have discovered. That's because he identifies it with the censorship, as the examples he chooses reveal. He comes upon this agency again in



delusions of being watched, in which it becomes confused with the person who commands the subject's actions.

Lacan, 1953-4, pp. 134-5

Lacan refers back to Freud's reference to Silberer in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), in relation to which Freud had drawn a connection between censorship and the watching agency (and conscience) in relation to dreams and in particular to the phenomenon of awareness of the functioning of one's psychical activity in the period just before sleep. Lacan reminds us of the symbolic basis of the agency,

This vigilance of the ego which Freud highlights, ever present in the dream, is the guardian of sleep, placed on the margins, as it were, of the dream's activity, and very often ready to comment on it in its own right. This residual participation of the ego is, like all the agencies which Freud takes account of under the rubric of the censorship, an agency which speaks, that is to say a symbolic agency.

Lacan, 1953-4, p. 135

We have already noted, in the Freud chapter above, that this issue needs further examination and we will want to look at how Lacan's comments here add to the discussion.

Lacan continues by reiterating the importance of the image in the construction of the ego and the ego ideal and refers to the operation of lures in animals to engage in sexual calling. The imaginary dimension of the ego ideal as opposed to the super ego is stressed when he says, 'The ego-ideal governs the interplay of relations on which all relations with others depend.' (p. 141).

Lacan next considers love, which he argues, is something that operates on the imaginary plane and which he links particularly to the ego and the ego ideal, saying that love causes a 'perturbation of the function of the ego-ideal (p.142).

Lacan queries how neurotics can be so good at transference and so bad at love. We will recall that the relation between love and transference was at the heart of the study by Jekels and Bergler, in which they argued that the cure for guilt was love. Lacan's formulations about love, the ego and the ego ideal may help us to pursue this idea further.

Lacan once again highlights the centrality of language - even at the stage before the infant has any recognisable facility with it. He refers to work by Susan Isaacs and the Koehler school who separately emphasise that at between eight and twelve months, children differentiate between an accident and an intended punishment and react accordingly, that is, they have acquired an ability to decipher intention on the part of another, an ability, Lacan says, shows they are operating in a symbolic world in which language produces a contractual relation between people (Lacan, 1953-4, p. 179).

Lacan engages in an extended examination of the super-ego late in this seminar (pp. 195-199). He leads up to its discussion with references to the case of the Wolf Man and to Strachey's 1934 paper on analytic technique.

He begins by emphasising the importance of the origin of the super-ego in *censorship*. Lacan argues that the 'task of censorship is to deceive through lying' and its effect is to split the subject between a known and an unknown dimension. Lacan says we find this censorship, more or less unaltered, in the super-ego. We have already highlighted the issue of deception in relation to guilt and will link it to this lying action of censorship.

Lacan then disputes the idea of the super-ego, prevalent in others, including to some extent, Freud<sup>3</sup>, in which it is viewed, as a tension resulting from suppressed instincts. Lacan provides a counter to this,

In a general fashion, the unconscious is, in the subject, a schism of the symbolic system, a limitation, an alienation induced by the symbolic system. The super-ego is an analogous schism, which is produced in the symbolic system integrated by the subject. This symbolic world is not limited to the subject, because it is realised in a language which is the common language, the universal symbolic system, in so far as it establishes its empire over a specific community to which the subject belongs. The super-ego is this schism as it occurs for the subject - but not only for him - in his relations with what we will call the law.

Lacan, 1953-4, p. 196

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<sup>3</sup> This, as Lacan points out, is the (1923) Freud of *The Ego and The Id*. The (1930) Freud of *Civilisation and its Discontents* is less reasonably accused on this score

Lacan is counterposing what he views as a self-referential view of the super-ego based on the distribution of libidinal energy and tension produced by its internal re-arrangement to a thoroughly social view of the super-ego.

To illustrate this, Lacan provides an example from one of his cases. His patient had a problem relating to the use of his hand. A previous analysis had focussed on infantile masturbation and had failed. Lacan linked the trouble with the hand to this Islamic patient's rejection of Koranic Law and an incident from childhood in which he had heard that his father was a thief and should lose his hand. It is the inscription in culture of this law which continues to function, at the level of the super-ego, for this patient despite his conscious rejection of it (p. 197).

It should be noted that at this point in Lacan's work, he is in full agreement with the centrality of the Oedipus complex and that he aligns the origin of the super-ego to the institution of the law in the subject via the Oedipus complex.

## **Moment 2**

We will examine this second moment in Lacan's developing thought with reference first to his seminar on Ethics from 1959-60. In this seminar Lacan is concerned with some ethical questions in general, the specific question of the patient's demand not to suffer and the question of the ethics which are argued to attend the practice of psychoanalysis. From the point of view of the question of guilt we will be particularly interested in the second of these but will also touch on the others.

Lacan begins his seventh seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* with reference to a transgression.<sup>4</sup> He sets out to clarify this fundamental transgression by first of all distinguishing it from the various self-punishing acts of the patient. He asks if this transgression equates to the transgression of the murderous sons Freud describes in *Totem and Taboo* or the obscure transgression implied in the death drive of his later work. In both cases he answers in the negative and says the transgression at stake is more fundamental still than these. Lacan locates this transgression in desire itself,

. . . The genesis of the moral dimension in Freud's theoretical elaboration is located nowhere else than in desire itself. It is from the energy of desire that that agency is detached which at the end of its development will take the form of the censor.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 3

The transgression is evident in psychoanalysis in what Lacan calls, ' . . . the omnipresence, of a sense of guilt . . . ' (p. 3).

Lacan, tells us that, contrary to what we might expect, the super-ego has a link to the 'real', and he will lead us to an understanding of that via Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*.

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<sup>4</sup> Dennis Porter, the translator of the English version of this seminar, includes a footnote about the difficulty of rendering the French '*la faute*'. He considers a wide range of options before settling on transgression.

Lacan uses Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology to assist him in reminding us of the importance of the prohibition of incest in Freud's work. Levi-Strauss's work confirms that the prohibition of incest, is, as Freud had argued, the cornerstone of the law and the basis upon which cultural development proceeds. Freud's genius, for Lacan, was to recognise that this prohibition concerns man's deepest desire - incest with the mother - the mother that Lacan identifies as coming into the place of The Thing (*Das Ding*) (Lacan, 1959-60, pp. 66-70).

We need to note also that Lacan relates the Thing to the drives, indeed what he calls the 'immoderate' drives (p. 110) and the satisfaction of the drives is what Lacan calls *jouissance*.

The prohibition of incest and its further codification in exogamy and exchange institutes language and the law. Lacan proceeds, via Kant and the ten commandments, to interrogate the law and concludes that the Thing is only brought into being and sought because of the law. In a discussion of the commandment which prohibits coveting thy neighbour's wife (along with other goods) he says,

. . . Without the Law, the Thing is dead. But even without the Law, I was once alive. But when the commandment appeared, the Thing flared up, returned once again, I met my death. And for me, the commandment that was supposed to lead to life turned out to lead to death, for the Thing found a way and thanks to the commandment seduced me; through it I came to desire death.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 83

Lacan likens his speech here to that of St Paul in his *Epistle to the Romans*, in which St Paul shows that it is the Law that generates sin.

Lacan elaborates this sequence in relation to Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. Freud, he says, has created a myth, but one that speaks to the modern psyche. The myth contains the same logic as the examples above, that is, that while the murder of the father was supposed to release access to his total quantity of enjoyment (*jouissance*) instead it was the catalyst for a widespread restriction on enjoyment and the prohibition on enjoyment strengthened.

Lacan says this is where the fault (transgression) lies and says of it,

Everything that passes across it is turned into a debt in the Great Book of debts. Every act of *jouissance* gives rise to something that is inscribed in the Book of debts of the Law.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 176

And continues a little later,

Freud writes in *Civilization and its Discontents* that everything that is transferred from *jouissance* to prohibition gives rise to the increasing strengthening of prohibition. Whoever attempts to submit to the moral law sees the demands of his superego grow increasingly meticulous and increasingly cruel.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 176

Having established this point of fundamental fault, Lacan immediately pursues another question? Why, he asks, does the inverse relation not work? Why can someone not just pursue perverse enjoyment and thereby not sustain a cruel superego?

Lacan answers by saying that there is no *jouissance* without there having been a transgression. He paraphrases St Paul saying, 'Sin needed the Law . . . so that he could become a great sinner - nothing affirms, of course, that he did, but so that he could conceive of the possibility' (Lacan, 1959-60, p. 177).

Lacan returns to Freud's problem in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) of the demand that "'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'".

In Lacan's reading, he claims that Freud's text is first and foremost, only and all about this problem. He also states that what Freud tells us is that *jouissance* is suffering, or even evil and, linked to the neighbour loving problem, it is 'suffering because it involves suffering for my neighbour' (Lacan, 1959-60, p. 184). This is why Lacan will concur with Freud that the injunction to love one's neighbour is a crazy impossibility. But Lacan goes much further than Freud in elaborating the fundamental difficulty at the heart of this injunction,

It is in the nature of the good to be altruistic. But that's not the love of thy neighbour. Freud makes us feel this without articulating it fully. We will now attempt, without forcing anything, to do so in his stead.



We can found our case on the following, namely, that every time that Freud stops short in horror at the consequences of that commandment to love one's neighbour, we see evoked the presence of that fundamental evil which dwells within this neighbour. But if that is the case, then it also dwells within me. And what is more of a neighbour to me than this heart within which is that of my *jouissance* and which I don't dare go near? For as soon as I go near it, as *Civilization and its Discontents* makes clear, there rises up the unfathomable aggressivity from which I flee, that I turn against me, and which in the very place of the vanished Law adds its weight to that which prevents me from crossing a certain frontier at the limit of the Thing.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 186

We should note Freud's 'horror' here and his related 'stop[ping] short'. Lacan rarely says something that has no significance. Here there is a ready resonance with Lacan's assessment of Freud's recognition that the Rat Man was immobilised by a 'horror at an enjoyment of which he was himself unaware' (Freud, 1909). This evocation of an enjoyment that was not to Freud's taste would go some way to explaining the 'stop[ping] short'. It is interesting too that Lacan refers immediately after to something unfathomable from which someone (Freud?) flees.

Lacan refers to Aristotle and the Utilitarians to interrogate the notions of the good proposed, respectively, by them, and shows that the split in the subject poses problems for their formulations. Likewise he shows that the obverse of Kant is de Sade and that de Sade's destructive 'nature' supports Freud's notions of the death drive. In an examination of tragedy based on a detailed reading of Sophocles *Antigone*, he argues that Creon is on the side of goods and State law and vacillates in relation to his desire while Antigone is the hero who relentlessly pursues her desire to its doubly fatal consequences. This shows,

for Lacan, that while following desire in its fullness may not appear functional according to man's law, it accords with what the subject must do, with courage, to placate the Law.

The conclusion that Lacan reaches is that '... the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire' (Lacan, 1959-60. P. 319). He relates this directly to the question of loving one's neighbour by noting first that Christians are rarely at ease and that their efforts to do things for the good become confused depending upon who the good is for. Pursuing the good and pursuing it on behalf of another does not mitigate guilt and neurosis because the trajectory of our desire, whose debt we must pay, is as likely as not to be at odds with the good.

There are numerous places in the Ethics seminar where Lacan refers to either feminine sexuality or the mother or both. We will highlight some of these as we will want later to show how this issue links aspects of this seminar to his Seminar XX later on.

As we have noted above, Lacan begins seminar XX with a reference to seminar VII. The very first point he makes is that he did not publish seminar VII. He makes two cryptic comments about his decision not to publish including an admission that he had had a failure of knowledge in relation to it. But he now realises he can say something more about it. This absolutely situates the problematic dealt with in the Ethics seminar at the forefront of what is to be approached in Seminar XX. It also links the question of knowledge, at the heart of Seminar XX, to the concerns of the Ethics seminar. He returns to the issue of publication later, this time referring to a possible rewriting of Seminar VII,

. . . of all the seminars that someone else is going to bring out, it is perhaps the only one I will rewrite myself and make into a written text. I should really do one, all the same. Why not pick that one?

Lacan, 1972-3, p.53

Given that Lacan has specified a relation between these two seminars we need to see in what ways they intersect. This will be taken up in chapter five.

As we have seen, previously, anxiety has been intimately linked with guilt and Lacan's new ideas on anxiety provide important theoretical formulations that may help us to understand guilt more fully. Lacan made anxiety the subject of his 1962-3 seminar and says of it that it is the affect that is of most interest to psychoanalysts. In that seminar he returns to Freud's considerations of anxiety in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* from 1926. But Lacan notes that there is an absence of anxiety in that study but refers to the more palpable notion of anxiety discussed in Freud's examination of *The Uncanny* (1919) in which Freud notes the familiarity and homeliness implicated in uncanny experience. Lacan extrapolates from this to produce a conception of anxiety based on the idea, not that something has been lost or is absent but rather that something is too close. He characterises this as the absence of a lack - a lack in lack, the idea of something being present when there ought to be an absence. This presence in absence is linked by Lacan to the mother. Lacan disputes Freud's idea that anxiety is caused by the non-existence of an object and argues instead that anxiety is caused by the proximity of an object - Lacan's object, the object *a* (*a*). Another idea that Lacan has at this time is that anxiety is an affect that does not deceive. This relates to the bodily effects of anxiety and the related idea that, unlike other affects which are derivatives of anxiety linked to specific ideas, anxiety is primal affect and related to the dimension of the real.

### Moment 3

The third period of Lacan's work we will look at is the early nineteen-seventies. We will look at the 1972-3 seminar, ostensibly on feminine sexuality though dealing with a wide range of issues, and given the enigmatic title of *Encore*.

The first thing we note about this seminar is that it begins with a reference to the 1959-60 Seminar on Ethics which we have looked at above and it is the case that many issues dealt with in that earlier seminar are revisited in this one. Lacan foregrounds two terms that he discussed extensively in the Ethics seminar - *jouissance* and the Law - so we will be concerned to see how his thinking on these has developed.

. . . I will remind the jurist that law basically talks about . . . *jouissance*.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 2

Lacan returns to the idea of 'usufruct'<sup>5</sup> which is also mentioned in the Ethics seminar and says of it that it '...brings together in one word . . . the difference between utility and *jouissance*' (p. 3), so we are picking up here again on the disjuncture between the good of the Utilitarians and the subject's pleasure. However, whereas in the Ethics seminar, the

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<sup>5</sup> Usufruct. From Use + *fructus* (enjoyment, use, produce, fruit) from the past participle of *frui* to enjoy, to eat fruit. Dictionary definition is as follows: 'The right to make use of and enjoy the profits and advantages of something belonging to another so long as the property is not damaged or altered in any way. Lacan has a slightly different take on this – "'Usufruct" means that you can enjoy your means, but must not waste them.' ('L'usufruit veut dire qu'on peut jouir de ses moyens, mais qu'il ne faut pas les gaspiller.') This may, of course, be a function of transcription or translation.

disjuncture was one between the good and desire, here it has become the good pitted against *jouissance*. By this point in Lacan's work, castration has come to mean the sacrifice of *jouissance*.

But Lacan also returns directly to the question of the Law as expressed in his conception of the superego, when he says,

Nothing forces anyone to enjoy (*jouir*) except the superego. The superego is the imperative of *jouissance* – Enjoy!

Lacan, 1972-3, p .3

We will pick up the commandment to Enjoy! a little later but for the moment need to understand more of what Lacan is saying about *jouissance* and how his ideas about it have advanced. Lacan goes on to discuss the separation of *jouissance* and love, thereby reflecting the putative difference between masculine and feminine sexuality. He emphasises the partiality, in a literal and metaphorical sense, of *jouissance*,

Jouissance of the Other, . . . of the body of the Other who symbolizes the Other, is not the sign of love.

Lacan, 1972-3, p .3

In this first chapter, Lacan is exploring what masculine sexuality aims at, what feminine sexuality aims at and shows that there is ‘no sexual rapport’, that is, that there is no complementarity between the sexes and that they bypass one another in pursuit of enjoyment and/or love.

Lacan returns to the question of the *jouissance* of parts

...one can only enjoy a part of the Other’s body, for the simple reason that one has never seen a body completely wrap itself around the Other’s body, to the point of surrounding and phagocytizing<sup>6</sup> it.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 23

And continues by reminding us of the centrality of the signifier in constructing *jouissance*,

The signifier is the cause of *jouissance*. Without the signifier, how could we even approach that part of the body? [i.e. that part of the Other’s body]

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 24

However a few lines further on he states that ‘. . . the signifier is what brings *jouissance* to a halt.’ (p. 24)

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<sup>6</sup> Phagocytizing – the enveloping and digesting of bacteria or other foreign bodies by phagocytes. From the Greek, *phagein* – to eat.

The same signifier that induces us into language and demands the sacrifice of *jouissance* promises an access to *jouissance* in the Other. We made the exchange in entering the social and cultural world but we did not reckon on the Other's relative insatiability so that we end up feeling short-changed. The Other of language, speech, culture keeps demanding something from us but only gives us back a limited amount and only then under specific conditions, that is, conditions specific to each subject and conditions that are radically different for masculine and feminine subjects.

We find a link back to the superego, a link between the signifier and the superego a little further on

... the signifier commands. The signifier is, first and foremost, imperative.

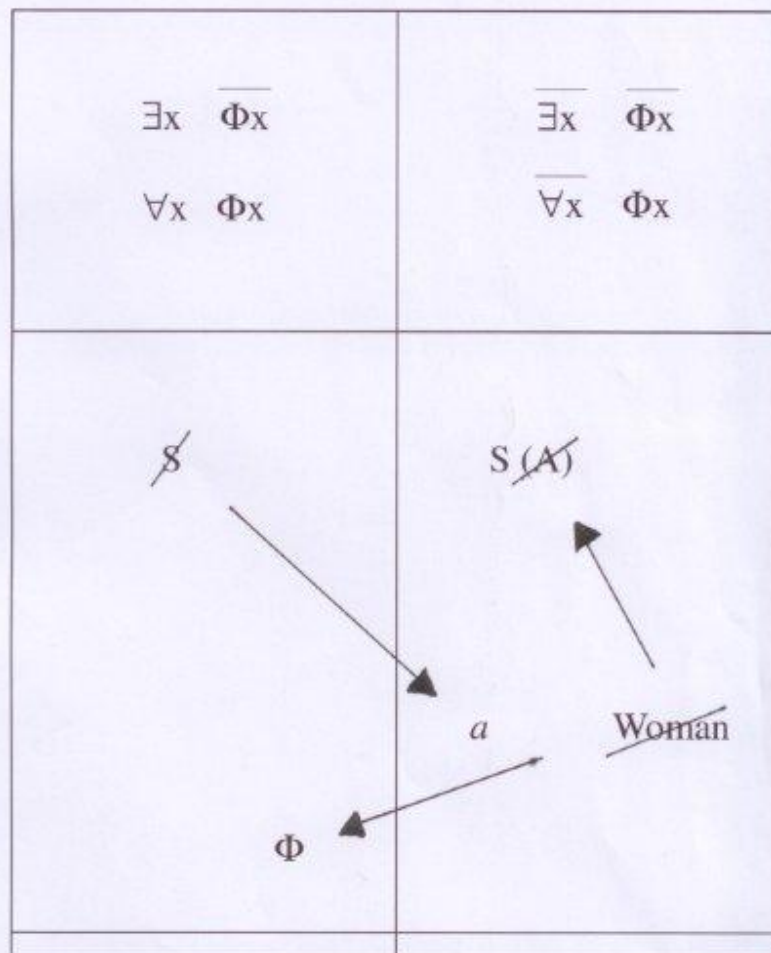
Lacan, 1972-3, p.32

A few lines previously the superego was an imperative of *jouissance* and here the signifier is imperative. How, then, to specify the relation of the superego to the signifier, will be a central question for us later.

We need to understand more here about the subject in relation to *jouissance*. In the early nineteen-fifties the subject was the subject of the signifier. In the Ethics seminar the subject is becoming both a subject of the signifier and a subject of *jouissance*. In the Encore seminar the subject, while remaining a subject of the signifier, is more a subject of *jouissance* and the relation of *jouissance* to the signifier becomes important. Additionally there is the complication of sexuation whereby the masculine subject is a subject of

phallic *jouissance* and the feminine subject is both a subject of phallic *jouissance* and has access to an Other *jouissance*.

To follow this we will make use of Lacan's graph of sexuation.



J. Lacan, Graph of Sexuation, *Seminar XX* 13th March 1973



We need to recall that Lacan moved from Freud's binary of having and not having the phallus to a binary involving being and having the phallus. In this seminar Lacan breaches the notion of binaries and instead posits this arrangement of sexualisation to show what the sexes aim at. Lacan had already gone beyond Freud's notion of castration to the castration as paternal function, the third term and thereby as genderless in its castrating effects but gendered in its gendering effects.

The top part of the graph deals with the relation of the man and the woman to the signifier

A man is nothing but a signifier. A woman seeks out a man qua signifier .  
... A man seeks out a woman qua – and this will strike you as odd – that which can only be situated through discourse, since, if what I claim is true – namely, that woman is not-whole – there is always something in her which escapes discourse.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 33

The logical quantifiers specify how a man is wholly under the restraint of the signifier while the woman is not wholly restrained by the signifier. Lacan specifies this distinction by reference to Freudian conceptions of male and female sexuality. Freud had argued that there was a generational division between the sexes. Lacan echoes this in saying,

. . . analytic discourse . . . brings into play that fact that woman will never be taken up except *quoad matrem*. Woman serves a function in the sexual relationship only qua mother.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 35

This serves to designate woman as subject of the signifier and her 'function in the sexual relationship' that is her function in the phallic signifying economy.

This contrasts with the signifier's subjection of the masculine subject.

. . . man is but a signifier because where he comes into play as a signifier, he comes in only *quoad castrationem*, in other words, insofar as he has a relation to phallic jouissance.

Lacan, 1972-3, p.35

Both masculine and feminine subjects are subject to the signifier and are only subjects in as much as they have been infected by the signifier. The difference between the two concerns whether or not that is the whole story. For the masculine subject it is - he is wholly subsumed by the signifier. For the feminine subject, in as much as she is subject, she is subsumed by the signifier. But, Lacan says, there is 'always something in her which escapes discourse' (p.33), some being beyond the signifier. It is in as much as something in her escapes the signifier that she has, for Lacan, a relation to Other *jouissance*. But this is extra to the sexual relationship, out of place, and functions in a kind of opposition to it. Lacan says, in possibly something of an understatement, ' . . . jouissance is inappropriate to the sexual relationship'. That is, inappropriate in the sense of improper.

In the bottom larger portion of the graph the masculine subject (S) being wholly a subject of the signifier aims at a phallic *jouissance* embodied in the object  $a$  ( $a$ ). The feminine subject (Woman barred) in as much as she is a subject of the signifier aims at 1. Being the phallus for the masculine subject in a masquerade in order to secure the phallus ( $\Phi$ ) from him, 2. The child as object  $a$  ( $a$ ) for her. But, in addition, in as much as she is not wholly a subject of the signifier, she has access to Other *jouissance* - represented here in her relation to the barred Other  $S(A)$  - barred because it is beyond signification.

It is this Other *jouissance* and what it represents with regard to knowledge and how it can be approached that is the centrepiece of this seminar.

Lacan's enterprise here is to consider what kind of 'knowledge' is implied by this Other *jouissance* and how a 'knowledge' of the Other *jouissance* is possible given that it lies outside signification. It should be stressed that this 'beyond' and 'outside' is itself the subject of Lacan's deliberations. Lacan is keen to remind us that the beyond and outside employed here do not imply a prior existence. The situating of this Other *jouissance* is not the localisation of something that exists prior to the advent of the signifier but is rather something that is brought into being by the functioning of the signifier. It is a portion of the Real generated precisely by its non-inclusion in the signifier.

It is this dimension of the Other *jouissance* that pushes Lacan to pursue his interest in topology and to explore modes of mathematical and topological representation to try to think this outside but inside and beyond yet insistent character of this *jouissance* and its relation to signification. This takes him into set theory, the topology of knots and the

geometric properties of the torus. These in turn allow him to model this *jouissance* beyond what can be said in words.

All the way through Seminar XX Lacan is asking about this Other of the body, how to speak about it and if it is possible to speak of this Other *jouissance*. He echoes Freud's demand to women analysts to say something of female sexuality in a complaint about their silence,

There is one thing that provides dazzling evidence of this not-whole. Consider how, with one of these nuances or oscillations of signification that are produced in language, the not-whole changes meaning when I say to you, "Regarding feminine sexuality, our colleagues, the lady analysts, do *not* tell us . . . the *whole* story!" (*pas tout!*) . . . Its quite striking. They haven't contributed one iota to the question of feminine sexuality. There must be an internal reason for that, related to the structure of the apparatus of *jouissance*.'

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 57-8<sup>7</sup>

If women, analysts or otherwise, have not said anything about feminine sexuality it is because they cannot - why? They cannot because this *jouissance* is unspeakable. The 'apparatus of *jouissance*' makes it impossible to say. And Lacan has already told us that the apparatus of *jouissance* is language (p.55).

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<sup>7</sup> Lacan is making another point in this paragraph about the 'not whole' formulation but its resonance does not travel well in English translation, as attested by Fink in a footnote.

But language itself is, as ever, a concern for Lacan and he makes some new observations about it in response to a presentation by Roman Jakobson. Lacan asks ‘what is a signifier’ and plays on the notion of the ‘a’ signifier, that is, to the ‘*un*’ (a) as both indefinite article and number One<sup>8</sup>. He notes that the signifier is something more than just phonemes, more than single words, more than sentences and is detectable in proverbs which carry a meaning that cannot be deciphered in their linguistic units or in the literal sense they convey. To designate this he invokes the idea of *signifiante*, which Fink translates as ‘signifierness’. Signifierness then stands for the meaning effect of signifiers that goes beyond their existence as unified elements of language. There is something of signifierness that therefore goes beyond the unit One.

Lacan goes next to the question of writing and shows that the written has a different character to the spoken,

If there is something that can introduce us to the dimension of the written as such, it is the realization that the signified has nothing to do with the ears, but only with reading – the reading of the signifiers we hear. The signified is not what you hear. What you hear is the signifier. The signified is the effect of the signifier.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 33

Lacan goes on to elaborate on the significance of the signifier in the construction of sexed subjectivity: and upon the limitations of the written (grammar). When it comes to sex

One could at a pinch, write  $x R y$ , and say  $x$  is man,  $y$  is woman, and  $R$  is the sexual relationship. Why not? The only problem is that it’s stupid, because what is based in the signifier function ( *la fonction de signifiant* )

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<sup>8</sup> The category One is of great importance. It is particularly linked to a paradigmatic scientific and philosophical stance that Lacan critiques, to God, to Eros and in opposition to the Other.

of “man” and “woman” are mere signifiers that are altogether related to the “curcurrent” use of language.

Lacan, 1972-3, p.

While ‘signifierness’ refers to Lacan’s understanding of the enunciated side of language, he goes on to talk about the enunciating side of language.

The ‘*La*’ that is barred in *La Femme* (Woman) is attached to *Langue* to produce *Lalangue*, one of Lacan’s neologisms to try to speak about something that tries to escape signification. The French *langue* refers to the spoken dimension of language. It brings into discussion the enunciating side of language where homophony, play and slippage point to something beyond formalised language.

Language is, no doubt, made up of llanguage.<sup>9</sup> It is knowledge’s harebrained lucubration (*élucubration*) about llanguage. But the unconscious is language, a knowing how to do things (*savoir-faire*) with llanguage. And what we know how to do with llanguage goes well beyond what we can account for under the heading of language.

Llanguage affects us first of all by everything it brings with it by way of effects that are affects. If we can say that the unconscious is structured like a language, it is in the sense that the effects of llanguage, already there qua knowledge, go well beyond anything the being who speaks is capable of enunciating.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 139

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<sup>9</sup> Llanguage is Fink’s translation of *Lalangue*, following a lead by Russell Grigg and referencing the stuttering dimension involved in it. See Fink’s footnote p. 44.

In this and in the discussion of signifierness, Lacan shows that the unconscious is capable of managing, at two different levels with both thing-presentations and word-presentations but that there are dimensions of language beyond those two and dimensions that have effects in/on the body. It is in this sense that Lacan can say that being cannot be subsumed by knowledge. There is something of being that will remain beyond knowledge.

Lacan explicitly links *lalangue* with the mother,

Llanguage [*Lalangue*] serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication. That is what the experience of the unconscious has shown us, insofar as it is made of llanguage [*lalangue*], which, as you know, I write with two l's to designate what each of us deals with, our so-called mother-tongue (*lalangue dit maternelle*), which isn't called that by accident.

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 138

Given the dimension of language being discussed under this heading and the bodily effects that it produces this seems to evoke something about the accoustic dimension of language - tone, pitch and frequency to use the terms invented by physics. While Lacan's reference above is to the mother-tongue, our first language, might it also point to the effects of the mother's voice? The affective dimension of *lalangue*, a *jouissance* of bodily effects seems to be the closest Lacan comes, or can come, to speaking about the elusive Other *jouissance*.

The other main theme of Seminar XX is love. Lacan makes a number of enigmatic references to love. In some instances he equates love to desire or sexualised love as in the love of the masculine subject for the bearer of the object a or the love of the mother for her object a child/cork, and even to the phallus in relation to which ‘she is not indifferent’ . But his references to Other *jouissance*, and particularly to its experience by mystics imply a dimension of love that is more Other-worldly. As in the seminar on *Ethics*, Lacan considers courtly love as emblematic of a non-sexual type of love. There is also the question of loving one’s neighbour.

How are we to summarise this complex seminar and show how it relates to our topic of guilt?

As we have seen, this seminar brings together language and the signifier, the mother tongue of *lalangue* with its affects and effects, sexual difference, sex, love and an Other *jouissance*. In order to see how these relate to guilt we need to tease out a number of elements in the relation between this seminar and the one on Ethics. That will form a section in the analysis chapter that follows.

While this chapter is about Lacan and his contribution to the debates around guilt, we propose here to also include some reference to one of his students. Michel Sylvestre was one of Lacan’s closest protégées but, tragically, died very young. His main publication was *Demain la Psychanalyse* (1989) in which we find some very interesting ideas on guilt.

In discussing Lacan's later ideas about guilt, Sylvestre provides an interesting argument concerning the origin of guilt. He suggests that guilt is a necessary correlate of the Oedipus



complex but argues that what is most important is less the murder of the father and more the enjoyment of the mother. The subjectivation of the subject, allows for, indeed produces, the object a, a remainder of *jouissance* available to the subject.

Silvestre attributes to the superego the following qualified imperative about the object a and the Other,

Enjoy! Only remember that it is from me that you gain possession of it [obj.a]. And know well that I won't let you do just anything, know well that now I am watching you. Know well that this theft, this subtraction by which you constitute me as barred (A/) gives me the right, (*donc*) compels me to make sure that you don't waste it, and don't think its going to be easy...

Silvestre, 1989,<sup>10</sup>

This constitution of the super-ego produces in the neurotic a call to the Other in order to legitimise the subject's use of object a. It is this solicitation and indeed deceit of the Other which for Silvestre is the essence of guilt. The adoption of guilt and/or the administration of punishment are both a relief for the subject.

The advantage to the subject in claiming guilt is that the other/Other recognises the subject's misfortune which up until that point was 'only a misfortune without reason' (Silvestre, 1989).

Silvestre argues that while guilt can take a range of forms there is one key element that defines it: 'The Other is solicited to intervene, to sanction or to reply to this guilt' (Silvestre,

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<sup>10</sup> This is my own translation of Silvestre.

1989). It is in this sense that Silvestre designates guilt as an affect that does deceive and contrasts it, in this respect, with anxiety, which Lacan has taught, is an affect that does deceive. Silvestre adds that its purpose is the deceit of the Other not the subject.

We will return to this idea of guilt in chapter six. Before that however we will pave the way by subjecting the ideas raised so far, including Lacan's, to an analysis in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis**

Now that we have gathered together the main contributions to this debate on guilt we need to sift them carefully and to see how they sit in relation to each other.

Here we will summarise the main elements in the arguments of the four main protagonists along with some comments on additional contributors. We will then engage in a thematic analysis of the contributions to investigate the arguments in depth and in relation to clinical examples.

#### **Preamble**

As the originator of psychoanalysis, Freud is a towering figure in this investigation. Without his work, it is debatable to what extent his followers would have produced the ideas that they did. It is often suggested that everything in the psychoanalytic field (and sometimes in other close disciplines) involves a debate with Freud. We will see below that, indeed, a debate with Freud is central to the work of the followers we will look at and their relation to Freud's work will be a key element in our discussion. However, Freud may have originated psychoanalysis but, like all offspring, it grew up to have a life of its own. We will also see that psychoanalysis, while honouring Freud, retaining the essence of his revolution and taking into

account his particular brand of fatherhood, needs to flourish beyond the strictures of its original heritage.

### **Summary of Freud**

As we saw in the chapter on Freud, we began with the question of self-reproach and the distinction between its place in hysteria and obsessional neurosis in his early work. The concept of censorship was central to his idea of the unconscious and was the prototype for his later construction of the super-ego. We noted the importance of the early notion of aversion and its relation to conflict and defence - two of the fundamental building-bricks of psychoanalysis. In the early work, the ego was associated with consciousness and defence.

The two cases of most crucial importance for Freud's understanding of guilt are those of the Rat Man and the Wolf Man. In the case of the Rat Man we see a detailed consideration of self-reproach and a need for punishment. Some of this detail will be considered under the thematic headings below. In the case of the Wolf Man, it is the twin issues of castration and deferred action which are key to Freud's theoretical development and we will see that this contributes to his developing ideas of the Oedipus Complex, castration and the super-ego.

In paranoia, Freud found phenomena that he linked to the functioning of the normal ego - in particular, the seeing/observing agency and the related voice that commented on action and criticised it. From these Freud developed a theory of narcissism that allowed him to construct the ideas of the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal. Here was an agency, part of the ego, that set standards for the ego and judged its performance but was also bound up with love. The construction of the ego became much more complex and incorporated splits between different portions. In addition the ego was found to be substantially unconscious.

In extended discussion with Karl Abraham, Freud considered the significance of mourning and melancholia to the construction of the ego and its varied agencies. Out of these deliberations and work on beating phantasies, Freud emerged with theories of the death drive and masochism. These contributed to a thesis about the super-ego which linked it to a fundamental aggression. This also drew on developing ideas of trauma, horror and primal anxiety.

Throughout all of this work, Freud maintained a strong interest in cultural ideas, many of which he linked to guilt. His work on obsessional neurosis was linked to investigation of religious practices, and a thesis about the origin of guilt linked it to a mythologised social history centred on remorse for murder of a patriarch. Later a theory of culture would rest on the thesis of primal aggression and explain guilt as the suffering inherent in the necessary cultural sequestration of that aggression.

## **Summary of Jones**

In his dense 1929 paper, Jones tries to unravel the relations between fear, guilt and hate found in clinical work. He posits a tripartite structure that links the three in a relation of reactivity.

Jones argues that frustration results from the non-satisfaction of libidinal wishes. The hate resulting from the frustration propels the infant to direct aggression onto the external source of the frustration. However the sadistic pleasure in this produces a reaction of guilt. This sadism is projected onto an external authority in the form of a secondary hatred. This projected aggression forms the basis of the harsh superego. The projection onto an external authority invites punishment in the form of persecution from the external authority in an effort to avoid (check out sacrifice) the greater persecution from the infant's own self-punishing tendencies.

In his struggle to grapple with the intricacies of this problem Jones develops the idea of two distinct stages in the development of guilt - a pre-nefarious stage and a stage of guilt proper. The former results from libidinal frustration, the second from sadism and ambivalence. The resulting superego is made up of fear, hate and love.

Jones privileges anxiety as always standing behind hate and guilt. He argues that an originary traumatic situation linked to privation produces primal anxiety but that the primal anxiety is ultimately about a threatened extinction of all desire that he names

aphanisis. It is in this sense that he can argue that pre-ideational primal anxiety is a defence.

Jones argues that the strength of the guilt produced has a direct relation to the strength of the sadism experienced and that subjects opting for either anxiety or guilt will be inhibited, neurotic or both but that this is counter-posed to the aggression option that has even more problematic pathogenic and social consequences.

### **Summary of Klein**

Melanie Klein's work in analysing children allowed her to, and in some respects necessitated her in, examining very early complexes. In doing so, she detected remorse and a hypersensitiveness to blame in a child of two. This seemed to both corroborate and to conflict with Freud's theory of the super-ego. On the one hand it supported the idea of a severe and destructive superego while on the other it seemed to move the Oedipus complex to an earlier point of development. This generated a particular interest in anxiety and Klein's early formulation of guilt anxiety. Klein's association with Abraham fueled her interest in the child's sadism and led, along with her research into early childhood, to her theories of aggression. Her emphasis on the early periods of childhood spawned a theory of the child's relation to the mother's breast that, when allied with Freud's death drive, resulted in the idea of a good and bad breast that formed the basis for all relations to objects. In the course of this work Klein considers the place of incorporation of, introjection of and identification with these objects.

She argued that the loss associated with weaning was central to a theory of privation and frustration and functioned as the site for the child's vengeful and aggressive phantasies.

It is the anxiety generated by the child's aggression towards what is both a hated and loved object, that propels the child into guilt and related efforts at reparation.

Klein implicates guilt at the centre of her theory of the depressive position, the second of her developmental stages but later argues that some guilt is detectable in the earlier paranoid-schizoid position.

In her late work she links guilt to envy and argues that a capacity for gratitude can help to mitigate it. In addition she seems to separate the terrifying imagos of the (distorted) parents from the super-ego.

### **Summary of Lacan**

Lacan's early work on paranoia led to an interest in the construction of the normal ego. This brought Lacan into conflict with the dominant ego-psychology trend in psychoanalysis in the nineteen-forties. In a return to Freud, Lacan re-examined, in detail, the functioning of the ego, ideal ego and ego ideal and the fundamental deceptiveness of the ego. In a reinstatement of Freud's understanding of the unconscious, Lacan emphasised the linguistic basis of desire. It was out of this that



he formulated a thesis on guilt based on the idea that guilt resulted from a refusal to pursue one's desire.

Lacan reconsidered Freud's ideas on anxiety and demonstrated that the great horror at the core of anxiety was not that the mother was or would be absent but rather that the mother was or would be too present. This constituted a lack of a lack and contrasted with the ideas of loss proposed by others. This led to a move away from guilt resulting from not pursuing desire to guilt associated with the pursuit of enjoyment (*jouissance*).

Later Lacan argued that there were two types of enjoyment involved in sexual difference. Phallic *jouissance* was linked to the masculine and Other *jouissance* to the feminine. These two different types of enjoyment linked to two different ideas about ethics which allow us to delve further into the idea of guilt, although guilt is not fore-grounded in Lacan's later work.

We will also refer below to the ideas of Jekels and Bergler and to Michel Silvestre's perceptive comments.

## **Guilt-related Themes**

We will now go on to look at the various contributions of these theorists under guilt related headings as follows:

Self-reproach/Sense of guilt/Need for punishment; Paranoia/melancholia; Aggression/death drive; Privation/frustration/castration/loss; Fear/Anxiety; Judgement; Father/Mother; Causality; Voice; Affect; Seeing/observing agency; Ego Ideal and Super-ego; Two stages; God/religion/ethics and Love. We will also examine how Lacan's two seminars from 1959-60 and 1972-3 work in relation to one another.

### **Self-reproach/sense of guilt/need for punishment**

As we saw above, it was with self-reproach that Freud first took up the question of guilt. We noted the ubiquity of guilt in Freud's hysterical patients where it often featured as a relatively conscious experience alongside unconscious conversion symptoms. In chapter 2 on Freud, we noted a number of self-reproaches identified by Freud. They were

Neglect of Freud, Neglect of a daughter, Mixed docility and mistrust, Duty to father versus erotic desire and Seeing a painful sight

In the majority of these instances the failure that the patient reproaches herself are failures to comply with the prevailing rules for womanliness. In the first she fails to anticipate and meet the needs of a guest, in the second she fails to engage properly in maternal care, in the third she vacillates between docility (we might say passivity which Freud himself used as defining of femininity) and mistrust ( a woman is often cautioned to be mistrustful - especially of the motives of men), in the fourth she fails both to honour and respect her father and she fails in according him absolute care and devotion and she does it in the name of her own pleasure, which incidentally, she is not, as a modest and unmarried female, supposed to pursue. The fifth is too indeterminate to judge. All we know of it is it evokes an earlier problem.

It was, however, in relation to obsessional neurosis that Freud encountered the excessive oppressiveness of self-reproaches. Let us consider the nature of the self-reproaches identified by Freud in cases of this type.

In the case of the Rat Man he reproaches himself for not being present at his father's death and the reproach is heightened by the news that his father had asked 'Is that Paul?' (Freud, 1909, p. 174). The Rat Man was fully conscious of this reproach but the affect associated with it had been repressed and falsely connected with a range of unconscious material. It is when some ideational content associated with the reproach is evoked that the Rat Man re-accesses the repressed affect and experiences tormenting ideas and what appear to be excessive affective responses to more innocuous occurrences. In the Rat Man's case we have a highly elaborated complex

structured around Rats, Florins, Debt and Marriage that emerges in his absurd obsessional presenting symptoms. These take the form of impossible injunctions. The Rat Man persecutes himself with commandments to understand every syllable that is spoken to him, to pay back money directly to someone by means of ever-more indirect and elaborate plots, to move a stone in the road and then to replace it. In the Rat Man's case the injunctions come in the form of 'You must x or y!' The compulsive nature of the Rat Man's commandments is backed up by the consequences that threaten should he fail. He therefore has a completely oppressive command and punishment system dominating his existence, creating an impossibility to live a normal life and tormenting him excessively. His whole mode of functioning is taken over by being compelled to do nonsensical things. This is in stark contrast to the hysterics above whose lives are hampered by their illnesses and exotic bodily symptoms. It is interesting to note in passing that a distinction between them is to be found in the relative inaction of the hysterics and the demand for over-determined action in the Rat Man. Their illness is characterised by being unable to do things because they are ill, the Rat Man's by having to do things as characteristic of his illness.

In the case of the hysterical patients their sense of guilt is their punishment. They are not threatened with a variety of punishments other than to feel guilt, worthlessness and to become 'ill'. In the Rat Man's case he is threatened by punishments, principally deflected onto the people he loves. This corresponds to the strongly anal component in the case and to the aggression which subsists alongside his love, indeed is his love turned to hate. In some instances punishments are directed to those

who interfere with his love interest, his father who he did love but also his lady's grandmother. In Freud's example of the woman patient from (1933 [1932]) we see someone who has an unconscious need for punishment. In her, also, the forms that her punishments take are in illness and injury. It is noticeable that the Rat Man's aggressive punishments are directed onto others although there is no doubt that he suffers tremendously, while Freud's women patients direct their punishments onto their own bodies or egos.

### **Paranoia and melancholia**

Freud's early work on paranoia pointed him in the direction of something paranoid in the normal ego. As we have seen Melanie Klein moved her conception of guilt from the later depressive position to her earlier paranoid-schizoid position. Lacan followed Freud in pursuing the relations between the normal personality and the structure of paranoia. We can clearly see the links to guilt in the very persecutory super-ego evident in melancholia so that we can ask if there is a continuum between the auditory hallucinations of paranoia, the cruel attacks of the super-ego in melancholia and the oppressive punishments and self-reproaches of obsessional neurosis. Freud and Lacan point to a qualitative difference between psychosis and neurosis while Klein seems to favour a continuum. A key distinction would seem to reside in the locus of the voice in each case, something that Lacan is able to investigate with his conceptions of language and the Other.

## **Judgement**

As we have seen judgement plays a crucial role for the ego ideal in its discernment of ego's attempts to reach standards set by it - ego ideal. The complex relation between the super ego and the ego ideal as to how does the 'judgement' of the ego ideal becomes the harsh 'judgement' of the super ego is difficult to disentangle. Is it the same function of judgement involved with an added aggression or does it require a different kind of judgement.

We cannot pursue the complex issues associated with the faculty of judgement, here, to any significant extent. However, we want to signal that this is an area for further investigation, in particular the issues of intellectual judgement and its relation to sexual curiosity raised by Freud, its relation to inhibition, particularly explored by Klein and the type of judging that goes on in paranoia.

In this context we would also argue that an examination of negation in its relations to judgement might be profitable.

## **Aggression/death drive**

While Freud considers sadism as early as his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905), it is not until 1920 that he develops a theory of primal aggression in his thesis of the death drive and 1930 when he elaborates it more fully as an indestructible element in

humanity. We have already noted Freud's trajectory through narcissism, melancholia and beating fantasies towards his thesis of the death drive and masochism. His discussions with Abraham in the nineteen-tens help to shed light on his thinking. In Klein's case we see her taking forward ideas from Abraham on early oral, anal and urethral sadism to make aggression a central feature of her theories.

What we see played out in their discussion of guilt is the following. Freud moves from a libidinal basis for guilt to an aggressive basis in 1930. Jones in the 1929 paper is trying to resolve the issue of libido and aggression. Klein opts for an aggression theory. Lacan reinstates the centrality of the libidinal theory alongside a theory of aggression.

Aggression is often talked about as if it is a self-evident category. What is aggression? Or in Lacan's case - what is aggressivity? It seems to that it has two parts. On the one hand a passion (or to use Freud's economic term, an energy or excitation) on the other hand, what makes it aggression and not some more benevolent state, a malevolent direction. Hate. What F is arguing about in 1930 is the energy. What needs to be further considered is the malevolence and it will, I believe, help our analysis if we can discuss the two questions separately. Where does the malevolence come from. For Freud it comes from a fundamental aggression.

The issue is not one of pitting libido versus aggression but of trying to understand how both are implicated.

The death drive cannot be understood without reference to the life drive and the ways in which they are understood to be combined.

### **Privation/frustration/castration/loss.**

Working retroactively from adult neuroses Freud developed, first, his theory of the Oedipus complex and then a theory of a castration complex that would destroy it. This constituted a core and foundational loss for his patients (and everyone else). The castration complex threatened the boy with the loss of his penis (or the enjoyment associated with it). The girl had to come to terms with its already lostness. For Freud loss equals castration. In the Wolf man case, Freud had shown that while all manner of losses may be confronted at earlier stages, it was only at a certain stage of development that the child could retroactively assume loss in a certain way and that that stage of development reorganised the child's history so that the child began their subjective identity from that point. While Jones subscribes to Freud's view, he nevertheless becomes co-opted into Klein's orbit when he pursues ideas of privation and deprivation chronologically prior to castration, as, as, or more, important than castration. When, as we have noted above he argues that the history of the loss prior to pre-ideational primal anxiety is influential he is taking a stance that puts him at odds with Freud's castration thesis. Klein goes further in redefining the Oedipus complex altogether to suit her own theoretical developments and despite



her protestations that she is following Freud, it is clear that she pursues different ideas from early on. Jones and Klein argue that the superego originates in the sadistic stage rather than the phallic stage. In this they relate to Abraham. Lacan goes through a number of developments in trying to account for loss and its effects. During the early nineteen-fifties loss is equated with castration but castration developed to mean a symbolic phallic loss (arguably already there in Freud) but harnessed to an understanding of language (only embryonically there in Freud) in which the child is understood to enter into a symbolic universe with the missing phallus as signifier at its centre. Later, Lacan equates castration with the sacrifice of *jouissance*.

Jones returns to the question of the point at which the internal trauma becomes externalised and the experience of privation becomes linked with an external frustrator - a move from blind terror to blame.

### **Fear and anxiety**

While Freud notes the fear often found in his hysterical patients alongside self-reproaches and the phobic fear of Little Hans, it is the terror of the Rat Man that offers a perspective on a degree of fear that is deeply disturbing. Freud refers to the Rat Man's '*. . . horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware.*' Lacan argues that while Freud writes under the title of anxiety in 1926, it was his study of *The Uncanny* in 1919 that allowed Freud to grapple with a dimension of anxiety which is only touched on in the 1926 study. Jones, as we have seen, offers a

thesis about layered fear that relies ultimately on a pre-ideational primal anxiety. Klein, too, foregrounds anxiety and fear in her deliberations on the early infantile ego and develops a vocabulary of terror to describe infantile anxieties. Petot (1982) undertook a quantitative analysis of the relative appearance of the words 'anxiety' and 'guilt' in Klein's published work of the 1920s. He shows that in the mid-twenties Klein goes from using 'anxiety' extensively and 'guilt' hardly at all to a completely reversed situation. Lacan, in his seminar on anxiety, introduces a reading of anxiety that incorporates all the horror that Freud recoiled in front of and shows us the anxiety associated with the mother and her presence. It is interesting in this context to bring Klein and Lacan together on this point and to note that Klein interprets her patient Rita as being afraid that a bad woman would do things to her in the night - an astonishingly clear invocation of a too present mother figure. Lacan's examination of affect leads him to conclude that, with the exception of anxiety, affects are deceiving in nature. In his seminar on transference (1960-61), Lacan responds to Jones's *Aphanisis* proposition by asserting that the subject does not *fear* aphanisis but quite to the contrary, wishes to take refuge in aphanisis and '... à mettre son désir dans sa poche' (1960-61, p. 271) - to put his desire in his pocket.

### **Father/Mother**

As we have seen above, Freud's castration thesis relies on a father's intervention to threaten the boy. As Freud develops his ideas on castration the father continues throughout as the site of the external authority that will threaten castration and institute the super-ego via an identification with his prohibition. In Jones there is no dissent from this view but we might suggest that his increasing interest in the mother

as the figure at the centre of pre-ideational primal anxiety, potentially puts him in conflict with Freud. In Klein, as is widely known, the figure of the mother plays an increasingly important role dependent upon the earlier stages of development that Klein is concerned with. In Lacan, the castrating father is first rendered as an agency that intervenes in the cosy mother-child dyad and comes to be seen as a function rather than a particular man - the function being known as 'le nom du pere' or Name of the Father, or 'No' of the father and symbolic of the Other of language. From the seminar on Ethics and the examination of Das Ding (The Thing), Lacan begins to pay more attention to the Mother (who is sometimes credited with being the 'Other'). The anxiety inducing mother of the Anxiety seminar is viewed as a threat that is kept at bay precisely by recourse to the involvement of a paternal injunction. By the time Lacan reaches Seminar XX his considerations of the mother and father have been subsumed under his ideas on masculinity and femininity but he maintains the importance of the paternal injunction as that which institutes subjectivity and forestalls psychosis. As we will see, his deliberations on masculinity and femininity open up some space to reconsider the mother.

### **Responsibility/Causality.**

The work undertaken so far on the 'Rat Man', 'Rita' and other material suggests that the common theme in these cases is the espousal (always erroneous) of some responsibility. Each of the 'guilty' parties inserts themselves into a chain of action so that their action has a determining effect. Perhaps if they had acted differently this wouldn't have happened. They speak or act in such a way that it is clear that they imagine (consciously or unconsciously) that they are responsible for some tragedy or

misfortune, sometimes to the point of absurdity and even comedy. This suggests a number of questions:

Why are people so keen to take responsibility for tragic events when they need not?

Why are people so keen to get in on the action, so to speak. That is, why do they want to insert themselves into causal chains, to be determinants in a sequence of events?

And, why do people opt so readily for guilt when an objective view might suggest more appropriate emotional responses, e.g. rage, fear, sorrow or pity? This dimension of guilt - the insertion of oneself as cause, in the claims of conscious guilt, and deducible in the acts of the unconsciously guilty, - is rarely addressed. It is the intention of the thesis to introduce this dimension into a reconsideration of the way psychoanalysis has theorised guilt.

The core arguments around guilt.

Ultimately the main question addressed in the debates of the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties concerns the origin of guilt. Each of the main theories of guilt provides an explanation for the origin of guilt - guilt is caused by masturbation, parricidal wishes, primary sadism turned round on the self, primary masochism/the death drive, not conforming to your desire and conforming to desire at the expense of the drives - but a range of arguments with a common aim - to interpret the cause of guilt.

What each of the approaches share is a search for a cause for guilt. There is something that the subject is guilty for. The subject did this or that, the subject didn't do this or that, the subject wished to do this or that, or wished not to do this or that (guilt deriving from prohibited wishes). In each of these cases the subject is guilty because he is guilty - of something. This positioning on the part of the theorists mirrors the activity of the various conscious and unconscious 'guilty' patients.

Each of these propositions is based on a questionable premise - that guilt is a reaction-formation consequent upon action, lack of action or intention. In place of this, basically neurotic, search for what it was that the patient really did that they have to be (ultimately) guilty for, a prior question can be put: Are they guilty of anything?

Of course *there is guilt*. This is obvious from the observation of everyday life and at the level of clinical material. But the idea that they are guilty of *something* seems to me a fundamentally mistaken (and unpsychoanalytic) one. It is also one that is undermined by closer examination of the available evidence. It may be that the plethora of propositions about the different 'somethings' that are supposed to cause guilt, testify precisely to an empty place, hopefully, but inadequately, filled by a series of propositions, or a variety of alternative interpretations.

The idea is that 'punishment' comes first and the adoption of guilt is a psychical strategy rather than a reference to acts or intentions, committed before or after. They are not guilty of anything - they adopt guilt, or even a series of guilts, to fill an empty

place or to answer a question - the question, in essence, being - Why do I suffer? or Why am I under attack?

Rather than seeing claims and manifestations of guilt as a surreptitious confession of something else - my parricidal wishes, my aggressive wishes, my desire for suffering, my refusal to commit to my desire or my pursuit of forbidden jouissance, none of which can adequately account for the insertion of oneself as cause, why not instead, accept at its value, the emptiness of the guilty party's claim. Here is an example from Freud's *A Question of Lay Analysis* (1926a) in which he is discussing obsessional symptoms and goes on with,

. . . But his state becomes intolerable if he suddenly finds he is unable to fend off the idea that he has pushed a child under the wheels of a car or has thrown a stranger off the bridge into the water, or if he has to ask himself whether he is not the murderer whom the police are looking for in connection with a crime that was discovered that day. It is obvious nonsense, as he himself knows; he has never done any harm to anyone; but if he were really the murderer who is being looked for, his feeling - his sense of guilt - could not be stronger.

Freud, 1926a, p. 9

Here is a prime example of the absurdity of guilty claims. In them we should see the anxiety that is being defended against and not a route to more levels of guilt.

In the Rat Man case there is a sequence which exemplifies this. Freud describes a scene from the analysis in which the Rat Man, denying the significance of his father's rage, piles 'the grossest and filthiest abuse' on Freud and his family. It transpires that he fears being beaten by Freud and has to move about the consulting room because:

If he stayed on the sofa he behaved like someone in desperate terror trying to save himself from castigations of terrific violence; he would bury his head in his hands, cover his face with his arm, jump up suddenly and rush away, his features distorted with pain, and so on. He recalled that his father had had a passionate temper, and sometimes in his violence had not known where to stop.

Freud, 1909, p.90

The Rat Man was terrified of (the unpredictable threat of) being beaten by Freud/his father. Freud describes how he insults him:

His demeanour . . . was that of a man *in despair*. 'How can a gentleman like you, sir,' he used to ask, 'let yourself be abused in this way by a low, good-for-nothing fellow like me? You ought to turn me out: that's all I deserve.'

Freud, 1909, p.89

Rather than be subject to the unfathomable whim of an unpredictably violent father, the Rat Man proposes and tries to provoke a more predictable (and less violent) punishment. We could reasonably re-render his proposition to Freud above as: 'If I

am to suffer at your hands, let it be as a consequence of my insulting you, let it be caused by me.' It is worth noting that this consulting room scenario stands in place of *the only* scene from his childhood, discussed in the case, that the Rat Man cannot remember.

This sequence of events corresponds closely to the sequence described by Freud under the heading 'Criminals from a Sense of Guilt'. In this short paper, Freud discusses the propensity to relieve a free-floating guilt by committing real criminal acts in order to have something to attach guilt to. (Freud, 1916)

What these examples seem to point to is an attempt to re-work a traumatic event so that the subject becomes the cause. As we have seen Ernest Jones tried to analyse (not entirely successfully) the relations between *Fear, Guilt and Hate*. Close examination of Freud and Klein's work and that of others points to the proximity of fear/anxiety to psychopathological manifestations of guilt. The exact nature of this proximity is not well understood but it is anticipated that further analysis will offer more clues as to the origin and causes of guilt.

What then seems to be the sufferer's problem in relation to guilt. It is that she *must* be guilty, that she is cause. The one thing she doesn't want to know is that actually she is guilty of nothing and that, much bigger horror, guilt/causality lies elsewhere, with all the lack of control and predictability that that implies.



As we saw in our examination of Freud he suggested that patients were guilty of the following: Masturbation and/or other perverse sexual inclinations or activities; A phylogenetic murder of the primal father; Incestuous wishes and Primal aggression

Jones says patients are guilty of: Aggression towards those who frustrate libidinal pleasure and Suppressed aggression towards those who are too powerful to be punished for prohibiting libidinal pleasure.

Klein says her patients are guilty of: Murderous inclinations towards the bad object; Sadism then Envy of the good breast.

Lacan says his patients are guilty of: Not pursuing their desire; Pursuing desire at the expense of the drives; Transgressing the Law and pursuing forbidden *jouissance*.

In a discussion of the patients who engage in a ‘negative therapeutic reaction’, Freud says:

In the end we come to see that we are dealing with what may be called a ‘moral’ factor, a sense of guilt, which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering. We shall be right in regarding this disheartening explanation as final. But as far as the patient is concerned this sense of guilt is dumb; it does not tell him he is guilty; he does not feel guilty, he feels ill. This sense of guilt expresses itself only as a resistance to recovery which it is extremely difficult to overcome. It is also particularly difficult to convince the

patient that this motive lies behind his continuing to be ill; he holds fast to the more obvious explanation that treatment by analysis is not the right remedy for his case.

Freud 1923 p. 470

Among the various points Freud is making here, we need to note the following: Freud will show that the patient is *really* guilty. The question that arises beyond this is what is the guilt itself masking?

In *A Child is Being Beaten*, Freud engages in several important and detailed discussions of the problem of guilt but begins with acknowledging the particular difficulty neurotics have in confessing to this fantasy which is nevertheless extremely prevalent. He notes that:

It is only with hesitation that this phantasy is confessed to. Its first appearance is recollected with uncertainty. The analytic treatment of the topic is met by unmistakable resistance. Shame and a sense of guilt are perhaps more strongly excited in this connection than when similar accounts are given of memories of the beginning of sexual life.

Freud, 1919, p.163 in PFL 10

One of the interesting things about this example is it gets to the heart of the confluence of sexual and aggressive currents and their relation to guilt. Later in the same paper and when discussing incestuous wishes Freud goes on to elaborate the appearance of a 'sense of guilt'.

. . . these love affairs are bound to come to grief sooner or later, though we cannot say on what particular stumbling block. Most probably they pass away because their time is over, because the children have entered upon a new phase of development in which they are compelled to recapitulate from the history of mankind the repression of an incestuous object-choice, just as at an earlier stage they were obliged to effect an object-choice of that very sort. In the new phase no mental product of the incestuous love-impulses that is present unconsciously is taken over by consciousness; and anything that has already come into consciousness is expelled from it. At the same time as this process of repression takes place, a sense of guilt appears. This is also of unknown origin, but there is no doubt whatever that it is connected with the incestuous wishes, and that it is justified by the persistence of those wishes in the unconscious.

Freud, 1919, p174 PFL 10

It is worth noting that this discussion is about the sense of guilt in the girl. There is an interesting contrast here between Freud's admission of ignorance in relation to the origin of guilt and his ' . . . there is no doubt whatever that it is connected with the incestuous wishes'. We can say that Freud is wholly subscribing to the idea that the appearance of a sense of guilt indicates that there is something which the subject is guilty of and so decides that the nearest available offence, in this case incestuous wishes, will therefore suffice as an explanation.

We can link this to a point made a little later:

This being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love. *It is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation*, and from this latter source it derives the libidinal excitation which is from this time forward attached to it, and which finds its outlet in masturbatory acts. Here for the first time we have the essence of masochism.

Freud, 1919, p175

In order to follow this point through we need to also refer to a further reference from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* the following year. Freud is talking about punishment dreams and says of them ‘they merely replace the forbidden wish-fulfilment by the appropriate punishment for it; that is to say, they fulfil the wish of the sense of guilt which is the reaction to the repudiated impulse’ (Freud, 1920, p.241).

This ‘fulfil the wish of the sense of guilt’ is a very clumsy construction but we perhaps ought to give it its due and see in it something that is decidedly troubling about the significance of guilt. We need to consider the possibility that guilt itself is employed to hide something else, that it has an agenda rather than being an end in itself and that in that respect it is fundamentally deceiving.

We can identify a common denominator in both conscious and unconscious guilt. The patient espouses some responsibility. Patients insert themselves (in fantasy at least) into a chain of action so that *their* action has a determining effect. Perhaps if *they* had acted differently this wouldn't have happened. Freud's woman patient (1933[1932]) acts as if she is responsible for some fault for which she must be punished - not only does she take responsibility for a 'fault' but she also takes responsibility (unconsciously at least) for administering her self-punishments.

If we look at Freud's case of the Rat Man (1909), notorious for his over-developed sense of guilt, we see this propensity for taking responsibility reach tragi-comic proportions. In order to protect his lady, during a thunderstorm, *he* must count. Again in order to secure the safety of her carriage *he* is 'obliged' to remove a stone from the middle of the road, and then *he* is 'obliged' to put it back again. His 'obsession for understanding' required that *he* understand the meaning of every syllable addressed to him. The compulsive doing and undoing and checking of obsessional neurosis consistently underlines the importance for the obsessional of his causal significance. We need to ask what the meaning of this search for causal significance is and to recognise the extent to which psychoanalytic theorists have colluded with it. Lacan, in his later work offers a perspective on this that allows us to think in a different way about causality when he relocates the fault at the heart of subjectivity.

## **Voice**

As we have seen the voice plays a central role in any discussion of guilt. On the one hand we have the ordinary 'voice' of conscience, on the other the persecutory commandments of the guilt of neurotics and then, in another dimension, the auditory hallucinations of paranoia. Lacan shows that the voice is an object of the invocatory drive and as such has a privileged place in the structure of the subject. The subject is called into being through the signifier and its conveyance via the voice leaves an indelible mark upon the subject. It is difficult to situate the various relations between the effects of the maternal and paternal voice in the child. Because the law is written (the symbolic father's law, the Commandments), the voice associated with the super-ego occupies a place alongside the law which comes to be represented by the voice of the primal raging father.

## **Affect**

Freud, as we have seen begins with self-reproach and fear. His developing understanding of the unconscious as a locus for word-presentations leaves the concept of affect somewhat adrift in his work. Freud struggles sometimes to try to talk about affect and, in particular, the apparently incongruous problem of unconscious affect and the specific problem of unconscious guilt. The examination of anxiety is what brings this issue to a head. Freud and Jones produce methods to obviate this problem. In Freud's case he gets round the problem by speaking of 'possibilities of anxiety' (1930) while Jones refers to 'emotional attitudes' (1929). In both cases they are indexing the linkage between bodily effect and ideas. As we have seen, it is Lacan's work on anxiety that allows us to get beyond this particular

impasse. It is Lacan's alighting on *jouissance* which reinstates the body and the effects of affect upon it.

### **Seeing/observing agency/Ego Ideal/Super Ego**

As we have seen the agency engaging in relatively innocuous seeing and observing becomes the all-seeing spy of the superego, able to 'see' not only the externally viewable activity of the subject but their intentions and wishes too. While the seeing/observing agency is omniscient, it is the aspects of judgement and criticism that introduce the idea of standards against which behaviour and desire must be assessed. The ego ideal and the super ego represent different sets of standards and also different responses to failure. The ego ideal is the locus of standards which the ego must try to and indeed wants to attain. The failure to attain these standards results in the lessening of the love of the ego ideal for the ego that is felt as rejection. The super ego is more threatening and less loved by the ego. It imposes non-negotiable commandments that must be met and when they are not met imposes punishments in keeping with the subjects signifying world. Both agencies operate with fantastical levels of functioning. The ego ideal offers distorted beauty and megalomania but also frightful dysmorphia and worthlessness. The superego imposes judgements that range from fascistic righteousness via wanton criminality to the worst sadism. Disentangling their operation at the level of the subject is extremely difficult.

## **Two stages**

In the course of examining Jones ideas we came across his distinction between a pre-nefarious guilt and guilt proper. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* we noted that Freud distinguished between what he called ‘social anxiety’ which he thought preceded the setting up of guilt. In Klein we see her distinguish guilt anxiety and guilt and although she does not clarify an idea of two stages in the formation of guilt, we can detect in her work a difference between the earliest stages of anxiety related to anticipated punishment and real or imagined privation and the guilt that she associates with the depressive position and, later, envy. Lacan’s formulations would support the idea of anxiety linked to loss that only later, with entry into symbolic subjectivity, becomes guilt linked to a superego. The very fact of two stages indicates that there is a significant difference between the early pre-Oedipal privation guilt and the superego or post-Oedipal guilt later.

## **God/religion/ethics**

We documented Freud’s various excursions into cultural and religious questions and how they implicated guilt. Lacan does make many forays into the cultural field. Although he prioritises his aim of speaking to clinicians he is not averse to commenting on a wide range of social and cultural phenomena in as much as that furthers the aims of psychoanalysis. In some instances he is reacting to Freud’s lead as when discussing civilisation and its discontents, in others he is flexing his own considerable erudition when he engages in developing critiques of, for example, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* or the pursuit of goods exemplified in American society. In both the Ethics seminar and seminar XX Lacan engages explicitly with



ethics and religion. While maintaining a secular stance, Lacan re-instates God's place in philosophy by arguing that what a study of the signifier and its origin teaches is that it emerges out of nothing, rather akin to the idea of the creation as proposed in the Old Testament. With regard to human subjectivity, Lacan claims that his view makes him more open to the idea of God than the priests for whom he argues God is more dead.

### **Hysteria/Obsessional Neurosis and Gender**

Freud began his psychoanalytic work with first, hysteria and second, obsessional neurosis. His first formulations on guilt emerge in his early studies of these clinical entities. Arguably, his key theoretical formulations, the unconscious, repression, transference and interpretation developed out of his work on these neuroses. Let us go back to them and tease out the key elements in Freud's ideas about guilt and let us also link those to another central concern of Freud's work - gender and its emergence in children.

The conflation of hysteria and femininity and obsessional neurosis with masculinity – up to a point, suggests that answers to questions about differentials between the pathologies may be pursued by engaging with questions of sexuality. Lacan, as we have seen, significantly develops Freud's ideas on sexuality so it to him that we will turn in order to pursue these questions. First however, we will consider the some of the developments between Seminar VII and Seminar XX.

### ***Ethics and Encore together***

It has become commonplace in the field of Lacanian studies for writers to show that later ideas in Lacan's thought are heralded in earlier work. In particular Lacan's seminar XI has been cited as the source of many of his later constructions. Other seminars too have been given a pivotal role.<sup>1</sup> While there are undoubted breaks and changes in Lacan's work, many of them announced by him, I do not wish to claim a pivotal role for the Ethics seminar, seeing it instead as part of a continuing process of development. However, there are particular resonances between the Ethics seminar and seminar XX that I would like to highlight.

As we have noted above, Lacan begins seminar XX with a reference to seminar VII. The very first point he makes is that he did not publish seminar VII. He makes two cryptic comments about his decision not to publish including an admission that he had had a failure of knowledge in relation to it. But he now realises he can say something more about it. This absolutely situates the problematics dealt with in the Ethics seminar at the forefront of what is to be approached in Seminar XX. It also links the question of knowledge, at the heart of Seminar XX, to the concerns of the Ethics seminar. He returns to the issue of publication later, this time referring to a possible rewriting of Seminar VII,

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<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the prominence of Seminar XI in this respect owes as much to its early publication and translation as to anything else.

. . . of all the seminars that someone else is going to bring out, it is perhaps the only one I will rewrite myself and make into a written text. I should really do one, all the same. Why not pick that one?

Lacan, 1972-3, p.53

Given that Lacan has specified a relation between these two seminars we need to see in what ways they intersect.

Among other intersections we could specify *Das Ding*, jouissance, the good, utilitarianism, Aristotle, the Law, creation *ex nihilo*, the superego, feminine sexuality and love as indicative of a relation between the two seminars. A related question about what differentiates the two might suggest knowledge. This is not to suggest that knowledge is not dealt with in the Ethics seminar but it is certainly not given the central place there that it has in seminar XX.

In both seminar VII and seminar XX, Lacan is taking issue with two philosophical strands. On the one hand he is engaging with Aristotle and in particular the *Nichomachean Ethics*. On the other hand, he privileges Bentham's utilitarianism and in particular, his *Theory of Fictions*. In both he is foregrounding a debate about responsibility, the Law and the good in order to grasp something about being. A philosophical strand that figured in the Ethics, that of Kant, has been done away with in Encore. Kant's scant appearances in Encore are merely to underline the arguments Lacan has made previously about Kant and de Sade as sides of one another.

In both seminars Lacan relates Aristotle to Freud. In the Ethics seminar he examines what he sees as a move from Aristotle to Freud, while in Encore, he very pointedly heads his lecture 5 with the title *Aristotle and Freud: the other satisfaction* and proceeds to show that even Aristotle, in his rejection of the sensual in the field of ethics, is nevertheless plagued by bodily effects - an other satisfaction that Lacan renders as a *jouissance* (p. 54).

It is in relation to this that Lacan engages with the notion of *la faute*. Translating this term into English is discussed separately by Porter (Ethics) and Fink (Encore). In the Ethics seminar it is translated predominately as 'transgression', and in Encore as fault blame or fail. The numerous potential renderings of this term and associated terms and wordplay used by Lacan including resonances between the verbs, *faillir* and *falloir*, point to both the sinful side of *jouissance* and its unfailing appearance (Lacan, 1959-60, p. 1n; 1972-3, p. 51n, p. 54n, p. 59). Lacan begins his Aristotle and Freud lecture in Seminar XX with an idea of needs that are 'not living up to' 'an other satisfaction' i.e. 'what is satisfied at the level of the unconscious'. This has echoes of 'not living in conformity with your desire' in Ethics but shifts the 'not living up to' to *jouissance* - in this instance, phallic *jouissance*.

The core issue in the Ethics seminar is desire, while the core issue in Encore is *jouissance*. But *jouissance* has begun to take a place in relation to desire in the

Ethics seminar, and desire maintains its place in Encore. In the ethics seminar, jouissance is an over-stepping of desire, its transgression. There is nothing nice to be said about it and it is definitely best avoided. In Encore, jouissance is in the process of being rehabilitated. For the masculine subject it may still be something to be avoided. For the feminine subject it poses less of a threat, and may even be potentially redemptive.

There is a particular comment on women in the Ethics seminar that might sit very easily in Seminar XX (and incidentally the ‘non-dupes’ referred to seminar XXI). Lacan has been describing Freud and his fatherly duty to psychoanalysis when he remarks,

. . . the father of us all, the father of psychoanalysis, what did he do but hand it over to the women, and also perhaps to the master-fools? As far as the women are concerned, we should reserve judgement; they are beings who remain rich in promise, at least to the extent that they haven’t yet lived up to them. As for the master-fools, that’s another story altogether.

Lacan, 1959-60, p. 182

We saw in Lacan’s graph of sexuation that he differentiates between masculine and feminine subjects on the basis of the relation to the signifier. The masculine subject is wholly within the realm of the signifier, while the feminine subject is not wholly within the realm of the signifier. This potentially constructs a

differential relation to Other *jouissance*, an enjoyment linked to the otherwise barred Other. Aiming at phallic *jouissance* via the object a the masculine subject is confronted with the enormity of transgression represented by castration, if he goes beyond his due. The relation to the barred Other is less problematic for feminine subjects in as much as they are not wholly subsumed by the signifier. This provides the basis for a differential relation to the superego and thereby to guilt.

Lacan discusses the idea of creation *ex nihilo* in the Ethics seminar. In Seminar XX this idea is elaborated to provide an explanation of the origin of the signifier. It is in this idea that we can take our study forward.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

In this concluding chapter we will bring together the threads that we have been exploring through the preceding investigation. To achieve that, we will work in four sections. First we will consider what the content of the messages are that function as the dictates that underpin guilt. This section will go under the heading 'Commandments'. Second we will take up the question of the power of those commandments and in doing so we will approach once again the interminably problematic nature of the apparently disproportionate severity of the suffering involved in guilt. Third we will bring those two together and see what can be and is done to mitigate them. Fourth, we will examine the impact of these findings.

#### **Commandments.**

As far as commandments are concerned there are two dimensions to the problem. On the one hand there are the demands placed on the subject, what we might call the contents of commandments. On the other hand there is the economic dimension - how passionately the demands are made or how sensitive or affected the subject is, how susceptible to influence whether from internal or external sources. It is not a clear-cut division between the two but we begin by focussing on the contents of commandments.

In our discussion so far we have examined a number of topics that relate to the question of commandments. We have considered what has been conveyed by the voice of conscience, we have asked what is reproached in self-reproaches, we have asked what three agencies - a seeing/observing agency, the ego ideal and the super ego - have to say. Now we will bring this work together to look more closely at the content of these commandments.

As we saw in the last chapter the content of the self-reproaches in hysteria reflect the demands of culture regarding the rightful activity of women. We also noted that, while the body functioned as a site for the writing of the conversion symptoms of Freud's hysterics, their espousal of self-reproaches was largely conscious.

In contrast, in obsessional neurotics, self-reproaches were themselves the core of the illness. In them, the self-reproaches did not reflect the demands of culture and were frequently absurd and nonsensical. It was only following analysis that Freud was able to show that the avowed self-reproaches were a displacement from another level and to argue that these self-reproaches masked a deeper and disguised guilt.

Let us remind ourselves of the range of injunctions. Freud identifies a 'Thou shalt!' and adds to this a 'Thou shalt not!' A variant of this is 'You ought to!' In less biblical



and more ordinary parlance we could include: ‘You must!’, ‘You must not’, ‘You should’ or ‘You should not’. Of course, the possibilities for variations on the wording of commandments are endless, and only circumscribed by the limitations of the signifier. The mode in which a commandment is given (or heard) and whether or not a commandment is intended or not are subject to the interpretations of different subjects. What we are aiming to do here is to try to distill something of the key features of these commandments. As we have seen, Lacan imputes to the superego a commandment to the subject to ‘Enjoy!’ (*Jouis!*).

The first point we want to make is with regard to the exclamation mark<sup>1</sup>. In English the exclamation mark is used to signify emphasis in writing. In speech, its equivalent is not encapsulated in the words used but in their delivery. An affective tone signals the degree of urgency or seriousness and implacability of a commandment. Commandments are not supposed to be rhetorical. This, then, takes us back to the acoustic dimension of language and perhaps one of the defining features of commandments - that they carry by way of timbre, pitch and loudness a force that goes beyond the actual words that are used. This suggests that Lacan’s idea of *lalangue* may be of use in pursuing their further elaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> In printer’s jargon, the exclamation mark is called a ‘bang’ which might be taken to indicate its use as a representation of a forceful acoustic event.

We can specify the commandments above further by reference to the clinical and other examples we have looked at. If we allow for some licence we can reasonably construct the injunctions in the cases we have looked at. In the case of Freud and Breuer's hysterics we have:

You must not simulate illness! Breuer (Anna O). You must not neglect to look after Dr Freud! (Emmy von N.) You must pay debts! (Cäcilie M.) You must not neglect to look after your child! (Emmy von N.) You have a duty to look after your father! (Elizabeth von R.) You must not desire your brother-in-law! (Elizabeth von R.)

In the case of the Rat Man we have

You must pay back the Kronen! And beyond that, You must remove the stone! And You must move the stone back! And beyond those, You must marry for love! You must marry for money! And beyond those, You must not wish your father dead!

We can see immediately that there is a qualitative difference between these commandments. If we take the Hysterics: We can ignore Cäcilie M. as there is insufficient detail given.<sup>2</sup> Every other example is commensurate with the predominant cultural demands on women in nineteenth century Vienna, and, arguably, most other

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<sup>2</sup> Freud explains that delicacies of confidentiality prevent him publishing the case more fully.

times and places. Women must care for children, family and guests at the expense of their own desires. The injunction not to desire one's siblings-in-law (because in law they are one's siblings, and moreover, in law, they belong to one's siblings) is generally enshrined for men too. Less obviously, Breuer alights on his patient's simulation as a source of self-reproach, however, elsewhere in the case there is abundant evidence that Anna O is oppressed by duties to her sick father and injunctions not to pursue her own desires e.g. for education. The simulation itself, however, relates to a general injunction for women. If women are required to care for and attend to everyone else, then being 'ill' and thereby demanding care on their part contravenes that demand and may be indexed by the extent to which hysterics chose 'illness' as their mode of suffering and why their 'illnesses' were so often viewed as malingering.

These self-reproaches and guilt declarations are invariably linked to what are called social mores. They may be written codes but more often than not they are the social conventions that bind social groups and may not be codified, except in the prohibitions and punishments of social control at the macroscopic and microscopic levels of social functioning. It is this level of commandment that Louis Althusser considers in his theory of 'interpellation' and that Rastko Mocnik elaborates in his examination of the role of fantasy in politics, a specific intersection of the subject and the law in which culture calls to the subject and places demands upon him or her. Exactly why and how particular conventions come to be adopted is beyond the scope of this study.

Freud's hysterics are generally guilty of failing to come up to certain standards prescribed for women - domestic attentiveness, anticipation of the needs of others, watchfulness over children<sup>3</sup>, solicitousness towards husbands, lovingness in general and modesty and propriety in sexual matters. Far from being the irrational responses of madwomen, judgements of failure resulting in guilt make perfect sense when compared to the dominant social mores placing demands on these women. Of course, we still need to account for why some women end up neurotically guilt-ridden and others do not. Some women have a masculine identification, some women have no real trouble confining themselves to the social role appointed for women and yet others may have problems with it but are not so sensitive to the conflicts engendered by contradictory demands.

In contrast, the commandments in the case of the Rat Man and other obsessionals, at least at a superficial level, are comic in their absurdity. On the one hand, the Rat Man's patently irrational commandments to literally pay back money to someone who was not owed it and the lengths to which he needed to go to try to do so, his imperatives to move and re-move stones in the road and to understand every syllable said to him do not accord with the demands of culture in any normative sense. It is only by engaging in analysis, that Freud is able to trace back the Rat Man's deeper

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<sup>3</sup> This watchfulness echoes the watchfulness of the superego, and is itself implicated in the regeneration of superego commandments.

guilt complexes, linked to fundamental commandments for a man - to marry (anyone other than your mother) and to gain financial security - these two, for the Rat Man, encapsulated in the conflicting commandments - 'You must marry for love!' and 'You must marry for money!'.

In the case of melancholia, Freud identified self-reproaches as in fact complaints directed at another. We can apply the logic used by Freud in relation to the complaints of melancholics - that they are complaints in the old legal sense - a kind of appeal to an authority. The general principle is correct, that is, that the declarations of guilt by self-reproachers; hysterics, obsessionals and melancholics, are calls to an authority, to see the problematic demands that they feel compelled to meet. The interesting ethical and political question raised by this is - are they legitimate complaints. Here the notion of legitimate needs to be considered in the terms elaborated by Lacan in his reading of Antigone. The complaints may be legitimate in terms of the bigger Law, God's law for example, even if they are brushed aside by Creon's law, the laws of society.

In hysteria then we have a kind of protest against the impossible demands of culture. In obsessional neurosis we have the masking of a deep-seated guilt by espousal of absurd self-reproaches and in melancholia, in effect, the rejection of guilt in the accusation of an other. In all three cases there is a relation to an Other. In hysteria an

appeal/protest, in obsessional neurosis an ad absurdum in melancholia an outright blaming.

In the case of hysteria - I am guilty but I shouldn't be. In obsessional neurosis - I am guilty but the demands on me are impossible to resolve. This (your) impossibility is an absurdity. In melancholia - I am not guilty, you are, and what's more, because you are guilty, I have to suffer.

At the level of commandments then we can identify two strands: First of all, commandments that are direct reflections of culture. You must act in a certain way. You must feel in a certain way. The hysterics, for example, are wearing their self-reproaches as emblems of culturally impossible femininity.

And a second type - you must disguise your murderous inclinations in absurdity.

The disjuncture between the ego and the ego ideal is the index of happiness or unhappiness. Thus, when the ego ideal's standards have been met, the ego has performed well and is rewarded with 'happiness', contentment, ease. Where the ego ideal's standards have not been met, the ego has performed badly and is rewarded with 'malaise', discontent, dis-ease.

So a first level of commandments are that they reflect the demands of culture. Your social and cultural environment demands that you must behave in certain ways. The mechanisms by which these demands arrive in individual psyches and the specific arrangement of them and their effects are, of course, an important part of what psychoanalysis aims at. But they are only its preliminary level.

A second level of commandments concerns the parents as conveyors of culture. In the case of the Rat Man - you must do this, you must do that. Again, the precise construction of one subject and the specific commandments of the parents interweave to determine to what extent any one subject is plagued by their superego or can function in relation to it with some modicum of manoeuvrability. This also is the concern of any analysis, but again, it is limited.

A third level of commandments concerns something altogether more disturbing and difficult. It is about the apparently absurd demands of an agency that is experienced as threatening. In terms of the commandments above it is rendered as Enjoy! Here, there is a dislocation between the exclamatory imperative and the demands of culture. Subjects need to be civilised. - but what is this left-over of commandments that goes beyond civilisation and begins, not just the social control of behaviour but, the oppressive persecution of subjects?

Slavoj Žižek offers an example of the injunction to Enjoy!,

Think of the situation known to most of us from our youth: the unfortunate child, who, on Sunday afternoon, has to visit his grandmother instead of being allowed to play with friends. The old-fashioned authoritarian father's message to the reluctant boy would have been: 'I don't care how you feel. Just do your duty, go to your grandma's and behave yourself there!' In this case the child's predicament is not bad at all: although forced to do something he clearly doesn't want to, he will retain his inner freedom and the ability to (later) rebel against the paternal authority. Much more tricky would have been the message of a 'postmodern' non-authoritarian father: 'You know how much your grandmother loves you! But, nonetheless, I do not want to force you to visit her - go there only if you really want to!' Every child who is not stupid (which is to say most children) will immediately recognise the trap of this permissive attitude: beneath the appearance of free choice there is an even more oppressive demand than the one formulated by the traditional authoritarian father, namely an implicit injunction not only to visit Grandma, but to do it voluntarily, out of the child's free will. Such a false free choice is the obscene superego injunction: it deprives the child even of his inner freedom, instructing him not only what to do, but what to want to do.

Žižek, 2006, pp. 92-3<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Žižek is evidently attached to this example as he uses it in other published work - see for example 'You May' London Review of Books, March 2003



There is a great deal that can be said in response to this example but here we will confine ourselves to the following comments.

First a juxtaposition is made between a traditional and a postmodern father as exemplified in two alternative commandments. Undoubtedly, as Žižek points out, the second injunction, by appearing to put some of the onus for decision-making back on to the child is more pernicious than the first. Not only must the child do what he doesn't want to do but he is guilt-tripped<sup>5</sup> into doing so.

There are at least three different possible responses for the child. Either he recalls how much Granny loves him and as a corollary that he loves Granny too and shifts his objection to going. Or he understands that he has no option and goes reluctantly all the while having to pretend to be happy about the situation (this seems closest to Žižek's idea) or he understands that he must go and he stays unhappy about it.

It is important to note here that there is a general parental ineptitude in the postmodern father's response. It so lacks psychological sophistication as to be

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<sup>5</sup> The pop idea of guilt-tripping (with links to the 'tripping' popularised in the nineteen-sixties) might be better rendered as guilt-tricking in that it hints at being tricked, through guilt, into doing something. Given what we have argued about the deceptive quality of guilt this would suggest a kind of payback - being tricked by your own trickery.

laughable. It is therefore a poor example from Žižek and we should expect better from him.

We need to note in passing that the traditional father mimics what Lacan has elsewhere described as the discourse of the master or the Law. You must do something because I say so. No explanation. This is contrasted with the discourses of the University, the hysteric and the analyst - any one of which might have lent Žižek some possible alternatives to the inept mumblings of the 'postmodern' father. Instead, Žižek proffers merely a slightly disguised version of the master's discourse. Note the continued inclusion of the exclamation marks. So, of course, the commandment is still entirely active, the imperatives have merely become more circuitous. That does have effects, most notably confusion. (For Lacan's four discourses, see Seminar XVII).

But we need to ask - does the injunction of the superego to 'enjoy' mean more than this example. Lacan introduces the idea of a superego commanding 'Enjoy!' in the seminar on Ethics and follows it up in Seminar XX. We know from Lacan's engagement with masochism that the injunction to Enjoy! is linked to an unconscious enjoyment of suffering and is most beautifully exemplified in the Rat Man's 'horror at a pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware' (Freud, 1909). Early in the Ethics seminar Lacan points out that,

Psychoanalysis would seem to have as its sole goal the calming of guilt - although we know well through our practical experience the difficulties and obstacles, indeed the reactions, that such an approach entails. This approach involves the taming of perverse *jouissance*, which is asumed to emerge from the demonstration of ts universality, on the one hand, and its function, on the other.

Lacan, 1959-60, pp. 4-5

He has already stated in the first few paragraphs of the seminar that a transgression is at stake and it is linked to this perverse enjoyment. The whole seminar is bound up with trying to elaborate the relation between the Law, desire, transgression and *jouissance* and, in particular, a *jouissance* of transgression. Lacan is still stating at the end of the Ethics seminar that one has to give up something to pay for the satisfaction of desire and that that something, the pound of flesh, is *jouissance* (1959-60, p. 322). By the beginning of Seminar XX, Lacan pronounces at the outset, that,

Nothing forces anyone to enjoy (jouir) except the superego. The superego is the imperative of *jouissance* - Enjoy!

Lacan, 1972-3, p. 3

The universal perversion of *jouissance* in the Ethics seminar has become the universal imperative of the superego in Encore. In the Ethics it is the enjoyment of

transgression, in Seminar XX, it is a phallic *jouissance* and its transgression, an Other *jouissance*. What we need to clarify is what this commandment to Enjoy! is commanding.

We should, under the heading of commandments, say something about the problematic command dealt with by both Freud and Lacan - the commandment: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!' Given that Freud singles this commandment out for special attention we should do likewise. This is an injunction to Love! Not only that, it is an injunction to Love! in a particular direction. It is both a commandment to love in a particular direction - the neighbour, and, at the same time, to love in a general direction - to love everyone. This is the basis for one of the rejections of it employed by Freud who argues that his love will mean nothing if he gives it out without discrimination to all and sundry.

But we need to be clear what both Freud and Lacan (that is the Lacan of the Ethics seminar), are arguing. Freud is primarily arguing that his neighbour's primal aggression prevents his being lovable. Lacan extends Freud's argument to show that the neighbour's primal aggression means my (and Freud's) primal aggression too, the hate that is at the heart of everyone. Towards the end of the Ethics seminar Lacan refers to the mystics as engaging in a kind of recuperation in their saintly sacrificial suffering for others (p. 322-3). However, when Lacan returns to the mystics in Seminar XX, it is to accord them some access to an Other *jouissance*, and one that

has a relation to love. The Lacan of seminar XX has, by his own admission, moved on. Among the knots and knowledge of seminar XX, the question of love has replaced the question of hate.

The transgressive *jouissance* of seminar VII is still transgressive of desire in seminar XX but, rather than being something to be universally avoided, it has become something to explore. Where does that leave the commandment to Enjoy! On the one hand, it is, as a superego injunction, a commandment to enjoy the signifier as such, and through the signifier, the object of desire, for all subjects. On the other hand it is a commandment to follow Other *jouissance* beyond desire, something that remains, for Lacan, impossible for the masculine subject.

Finally, with regard to commandments there is the unspoken 'or else!' - there is an unspoken threat lurking in the exclamation marks. Sometimes it is a spoken threat. What is threatened? Punishment. It can take many forms, physical threats, the threat to liberty, social rejection. For the ego it is also always a question of not being loved by the ego ideal.

As we have seen, there are problems for subjects in interpreting and dealing with the conflicting and sometimes contrary nature of the content of commandments. However, we have also seen that it is less the signifiers making up the

commandments and more their conveyance wrapped in threatening affect that causes problems and that specifically points to the suffering/enjoyment that they contain.

Is it to be understood as the tyrannical enjoyment of an evil persecutor - this certainly seems to be the inflection it has in notions like the daimon of Jekels and Bergler. In this instance, the very least we can say is that there is an anthropomorphisation of what is presented to us elsewhere as a structural necessity.

Where things get difficult for us with this commander is in its relative severity. It is in its severity that we apprehend a dimension of language that seems to go beyond word-presentations and thing-presentations (Freud) and the signifier (Lacan). We referred earlier to the raging voice of the super ego in melancholia. We need now to approach this raging, harsh, severe, cruel and tyrannical dimension of guilt.

Before we proceed with the next section however it is worth remarking that this voice continues to taunt and harangue us. There is, it seems, a wrong that must be put right.

### **Jouissance and masochism**

We have considered something of the commandments as expressed in their content. Now we will consider the problem of commandments from their point of view as

cruel imperatives. What we are focussing on is the persistent, repetitive, pressing nature of these commandments. Why do they press? What do they press?

Let us explore their range. In the self-reproaches of the hysterics the patients were not described as being particularly persecuted by their commandments. They were, as Freud puts it, 'hard on themselves' no doubt, but their self-reproaches were not debilitating, as in the case of obsessionals, nor loud, as in the case of melancholics. For the hysterics, their suffering was not associated with their self-reproaches but had been repressed into, for the most part, their conversion symptoms. Their self-reproaches were, seemingly, for the most part, accessible to consciousness. In the case of the Rat Man his suffering involved a displacement of the affect associated with his important personal dilemmas on to a range of absurd problems. Freud shows that there is a rejected enjoyment behind the Rat Man's suffering. It is through melancholia that Freud approached the idea of enjoyable suffering culminating in his theory of primary masochism in 1924. While the death drive often becomes equated with primary masochism (see, for example, Lacan, 1959-60), we should try to disentangle them. The death drive is always posited as something destructive and negative. Masochism has a somewhat contradictory character as it implies a positive enjoyment of a negative suffering or pain. The tendency toward masochism may be in keeping with the destructive aim of the death drive but they are not synonymous. The death drive is characterised as a silent thing. Masochism (and sadism) give a voice to this silent trend and that voice says precisely - Enjoy! As Lacan pointed out, the aim in perversion is to force the Other to enjoy. In the superego - the silent death drive has

found a voice. And what a voice it is. The content of its commandments may be Enjoy, Thou shalt, Suffer, but it needs the missing exclamation marks to make its point. We need to understand the imperativeness of the imperative.

The twin concepts of *jouissance* and masochism allow us to proceed. The difference between pleasure and *jouissance* is key to this problem. Beyond the principle of pleasure and unpleasure, a civilised economy, *jouissance* encapsulates a notion of enjoyment that is both attractive and horrific. Its overwhelming quality relates it to anxiety and trauma.

For the sake of simplicity I am proposing to reduce the various references to the character of the superego to one of cruelty. On the one hand cruelty incorporates the notion of meanness, on the other it imputes an intentionality to this agency. We will come back to the question of intentionality but for the moment will focus on the meanness of the cruelty.

All of our theorists are agreed on one thing. There is a degree of cruelty in the functioning of the superego that cannot be accounted for by the normal demands of education or upbringing. The inclusion of children into their cultural environment does not seem to necessitate tyranny on the part of parents and educators and yet, tyranny seems to function in the cruelty of the superego.



We have seen that each of the theorists has struggled heroically with this problem.

Let us recall the various solutions they have offered for this monumental conundrum:

Freud: We did a wrong in the past and it keeps having to be paid for (1912-13). A mysterious destructive force requires our suffering (1920). There is a primal wish to suffer (1924). There is a primal aggression at the heart of humanity (1930). Alongside each of these, of course, Freud develops and refines his ideas about the Oedipus and castration complexes. Jones: Primal anxiety is the root. Klein: There is a primal aggression in infancy. There is a primal anxiety in infancy. The privation of weaning sets in motion an exponential relation between anxiety and aggression that produces guilt. Lacan: There is a primal aggression at the heart of humanity (1959-60). There is a defence against The Thing (1959-60). Masochism (1962-3). There is a structural problem at the heart of desire (1972-3). The signifier constructs a real that threatens (1972-3). We need to reconsider the question a) is there a primal fault? And b) if there is, what is it? While Freud provides us with the ground on which to investigate this question, it is Lacan who provides us with the tools to solve it. As we saw in our discussion of the Ethics seminar, Lacan supports Freud's postulation of primal aggression. However he simultaneously probes the problem of guilt to take the issue further.

Lacan gets the idea of *jouissance* from Freud. He works with what is horror, the uncanny, anxiety and a beyond of the pleasure principle. Lacan's phallic *jouissance* can be understood in relation to Freud's pleasure but Other *jouissance* is another matter. It is Other *jouissance* that is implicated in the enjoyment of the primal father that appears in the cruel and tyrannical voice of the superego. Freud's beyond, the death drive is mute and silent and he always says that it cannot be known. Lacan takes this lack of knowledge as a starting point for one of his lines of enquiry in seminar XX. Psychoanalysis is constituted around questions of knowledge. Freud's discovery of the unconscious is a conceptualisation of where knowing ends and not knowing begins. Lacan's deliberations on the question of knowledge try to go beyond what Freud has put in place.

It is as if there were a pressure from somewhere, history, culture, the body - that is oppressive in the extreme. A fault. Either it arises from some fault in history - Freud's primal murder of the father as an initiatory stain that has to be paid for over and over again or is some fault in the body - a primal aggression or primal anxiety. We will see a little later that Lacan's formulation allows us to move forward.

What we are trying to talk about here is Other *jouissance*. The great difficulty in speaking about (or writing about) Other *jouissance*, is precisely its unspeakability. Other *jouissance* can be circumscribed and Lacan finds methods to model and represent its place, if not it, if it can be referred to as such, itself. We will therefore

proceed by looking at what can be spoken about and its relation to this unspeakable enjoyment.

### **The law of desire. The Law and Desire.**

As we saw in the last chapter there is a correspondence between the Ethics seminar and Seminar XX. We could say that the problems that Lacan is struggling with in the Ethics seminar find their solution in Seminar XX.

We noted in the discussion of Encore that Lacan proposes a way of thinking about sexuation and copulation, even going so far as to propose copulation as the base of philosophy everywhere. All the way through Seminar XX Lacan keeps coming back to the question of Other *jouissance* - it is the question that does not stop being written. But we need to consider the limits placed on enjoyment by the signifier. We have made much of the Other *jouissance* because it plays such a central role in Seminar XX but we need to emphasise that feminine subjects are subject to the signifier in just the same way as masculine subjects. Some potential access to Other *jouissance* may open up important avenues for new research but it does not change the fact that for most women, most of the time, their subjectivity via the signifier is what they live and that the limits placed on phallic *jouissance* are the same for masculine and feminine subjects. Freud had established that there was only one libido that he called masculine. Lacan too categorises sexual *jouissance* as phallic *jouissance* and attributes an interest in it to both sexes.

Freud put in place a different experience of castration for boys and girls. Little boys relate to the absence of the penis by ‘literally smashing to pieces’ the Oedipus complex. With little girls the trajectory is much less violent and takes more time. Lacan’s rethinking of castration as the installation of the paternal function reconfigures our thinking about how the boy and girl are sexed and brought into the symbolic universe in one move – and one that functions similarly for both. All subjects are subject to the signifier,

The signifier is the cause of *jouissance*. Without the signifier, how could we even approach that part of the body?

Lacan, 1972-3, p.24

The part of the body referred to in the quote picks up on Lacan’s emphasis earlier that *jouissance* is a *jouissance* of ‘parts’ – parts of the body aimed at by sexual *jouissance*.

Lacan’s graph of sexuation (p.174 above) depicts the relation to the signifier of masculine and feminine subjects. It also demonstrates that, famously, ‘. . . there is no sexual relation’. What Lacan means by this is that there is no complementarity

between the sexes. The romantic view of sexual encounters suggests that, like Aristophanes two halves, people will find their sexual complement in their partner. What Lacan shows is that the encounter is a missed one in that what each subject is aiming for is not necessarily what the other wants to offer. In the search for sexual *jouissance* the 'partners' are less a 'rapport' and more like 'ships in the night' bypassing one another in their solitary fantasies.

There is another strand of thought that runs between the Ethics seminar and Encore that may allow us to think further about guilt. In Seminar VII, Lacan introduces the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. This is the idea that the construction of the language-ruled world, the creation of the signifier as something that functions at a symbolic level in a system of signifiers that is, ultimately a closed system that always refers to itself - a signifier is always a signifier for another signifier - implies its origin out of nothing. This corresponds to the idea of language prevalent in myth and religion. The God of monotheism announces that he is the word and most other myths of the origin of language have it arriving via an animal from nowhere, from the sky (space) or the sea. While this idea is introduced in seminar VII, it is taken up again in seminar XX with an emphasis on understanding more about the nature of this signifier, its closed system relation to other signifiers and what is implied by what is not included in this closed system but yet seems to impact upon it. The location of the *ex nihilo*, the nothing, the place that is outside the closed system yet in-sists in it, is what propels Lacan to try to think spatial relations by recourse to topology. The *ex nihilo* notion of the creation of the signifier heralds the idea of a remainder beyond the signifier that,

by definition, is void, abyssmal, infinite and a threat to the integrity of the signifier itself. This threatening abyss is the real Other. Within the realm of the signifier, the only place in which thinking and signifying for subjects is possible, this threatening Other becomes linked to God, the Woman, especially as mother and any imaginary or symbolic other at any point in culture that functions as a site of expulsion or rejection, for example the ethnic or racial Other. Otherness for the signifying realm is both a source of attraction and repulsion. The wish to signify the void draws subjects to it but the threat to the integrity of the signifier, its *aphanisis* we might say, invoking Jones, is the site for primal anxiety.

Lacan has argued that anxiety is an affect that does not deceive. What does this mean? It means that there is a primal bodily rawness to anxiety that shows itself in the potential collapse of the body - the body held together by signifiers. The traumatic beyond-signification side of anxiety proper means that, in a sense, it is always primal. Lacan's description of anxiety as an affect that does not deceive demonstrates the privileged place anxiety has among what are called the affects. The point about it, according to Lacan, is that it is the only affect that does not deceive (Lacan, 1962-3). All other affects engage in a form of deceit, that is, in terms of what they appear to signify. Silvestre has singled out guilt as a particular example of an affect that does deceive because it seeks to deceive in ways that are commensurate with the functioning of psychoanalysis. The appeal to the Other that he detects in guilt becomes an appeal to the analyst in psychoanalysis, giving it a particular place in psychoanalysis. Other affects, because they all derive ultimately from anxiety,

deceive in different ways. The differential deceptions of different affects would make an interesting research project itself in the broader research project that is psychoanalysis. Deceptions are always deceptions of the signifier, employed in different ways.

With guilt, as we have seen, its particular deception is to appeal to the Other about the unfairness of the signifier. The signifier, by its very nature is a limiter.

What is the specificity of guilt as a deceiver? We have considered a number of ideas from most of the theorists about the relation of anxiety to guilt. In a general sense we have argued that guilt is a defence against anxiety. Of course, the very specific employment of guilt in individual cases can only be disentangled on a one by one basis. We have examined some of the strategies of guilt in different pathologies - hysteria, obsessional neurosis and melancholia. We need now to say something further about the nature of the defence against guilt and the type of deception used by it. Michel Silvestre has shown us that it involves an appeal to the Other.

What does the guilty subject's pleading demand. At bottom it asks for a recognition from the other/Other that the guilty party is responsible for something, that causality resides in the subject. The subject is guilty because it has acted or not acted (which is to act). This therefore implies that the subject is no longer solely a function of forces,

Others, real and symbolic, who/which determine his/her fate. If a subject is not subject to the whim of an uncontrollable Other then a) the subject has some agency, b) the Other is not in charge but, most importantly, and underlying these two, c) a symbolic Other exists.

While Silvestre maintains, with Lacan, that a 'real' transgression is effected by the subject in his claims to enjoyment (*jouissance*), he notes something about the claims of guilt. He refers to Lacan's point that anxiety is an affect which does not deceive and counterposes to this the idea that guilt is an affect which indeed does deceive. The deceit in question for Silvestre concerns the content of guilt. The subject tries to deceive the Other with his guilty claims - I am guilty of this, or that or something else-anything but what I am 'really' guilty of. We are proposing to go a stage further. The subject is not so much deceitful in his claims about what he is guilty of but with regard to whether he is guilty, of anything, at all.

Why this deception?

What is the neurotic's problem in relation to guilt? It is that he *must* be guilty, that he *must* be cause. The alternative, the thing he doesn't want to know, is that actually he is guilty of nothing and that, much bigger horror, guilt/causality lies elsewhere, with all the powerlessness, terror and unpredictability that that implies.



It is in the recognition from the symbolic Other that the subject is guilty that the guilty subject gains his or her reassurance that the symbolic Other exists. The absence of the symbolic Other, means the presence of the real Other - and the locus of traumatic anxiety. In this sense, guilt is a specific and relatively successful defence against anxiety.

But it is more than this too. The experience of anxiety points to a fault. We have seen that this fault has been theorised in a range of different ways by our theorists - most of whom have come down on the side of a fault in the subject - its primal anxiety, its primal aggression, its primary masochism, its death drive or a fault in human history - murder of the primal father. What Lacan allows us to see in the *ex nihilo* creation of the signifier and subjectivity, is a fault constituted in the moment of constitution of the signifier, a fault produced by the limits of the signifier to tame everything of the flesh. The signifier cannot control everything, something escapes it but continues to press on it. Anxiety arises whenever this fault line is breached and is an index of it. Guilt is a response which involves trying to take some modicum of responsibility for the fault so that the fault does not continue to reside wholly in the Other. This is its deceit, its success and its failure.

This also points to what should be done with guilt in the clinical setting. If, as we are arguing, guilt always involves a deceit, then guilt should never be taken clinically as

indicating a real guilt. The subject is not responsible for what he or she claims to be responsible for and collusion in their responsibility by analysts will merely leave both in a sterile closed circuit.

This does not, of course, mean that subjects do not have to make ethical choices. But as we have shown there is rarely a correspondence between affirmations of guilt and real responsibility for ethical integrity. On the one hand, the espousal of guilt is often a sham that means nothing more than a repository for and signification of anxiety while on the other hand, human subjects often act in unethical ways but do not experience guilt. The foundation of an ethics for the subject cannot be linked to a guilty defence against anxiety, but needs to be constructed otherwise. This might imply a total relativism of ethical practice but better to deal with that and find a route through it than to create false ethics based on guilt. The ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ offers a potential route through love - precisely what Lacan points to in the seminar *Encore*.

It is questionable to what extent the Other is a threat to the integrity of the signifier. In one sense it is a threat as it is constituted by the signifier as a threat - in that sense a symbolic threat. In another sense it is viewed as a threat, a real threat, in as much as it is the site of the unknowable and unspeakable. Therefore, in as much as a subject is a subject of the signifier, it is a threat. In as much as a subject escapes the signifier, the question is much less settled. In seminar XX Lacan says of the mystics and women,

in as much as they have access to Other *jouissance*, that they may experience it but they cannot know it. They may approach it and, somehow, under certain conditions, survive. Indeed, for some subjects who are not wholly subsumed by the signifier, it seems possible to engage with Other *jouissance* but return from the experience to function perfectly well within the domain of the signifier. It is precisely to those subjects that, we can argue, Lacan makes his appeal for them to speak of it. The equation of Other *jouissance* as a site for a madness beyond the signifier does however make this a precarious exercise and one not to be taken lightly - hence Lacan's additional appeal for courage. Here the function of sexuation seems to be played out in the differential relation to the signifier and the barred Other of masculine and feminine subjects. In as much as subjects are wholly subsumed by the signifier, the vicissitude of masculine subjects, they are prohibited from accessing Other *jouissance* and any encounter with it will be experienced as traumatic. In as much as they are not wholly subsumed by the signifier, the vicissitude of feminine subjects, they are not necessarily prohibited from accessing Other *jouissance*. The questions remaining, in this context, therefore, are: how, when and by what means can or do women, mystics and perhaps others (poets?), access Other *jouissance*; what do they find there and what can be spoken of it; what kinds of engagement with it might be possible that do not involve the signifier; what kinds of relation to Other *jouissance* are possible for masculine subjects given that an approach to it produces an insurmountable threat and what are the parameters of the void out of which it arises?

All of our theorists have probed this question, under even more mysterious guises, at great length and yet it has remained inadequately theorised and perplexingly unexplained.

If we look at Lacan's work we see how he tries to go beyond the impasses remaining in Freud and his followers. In the Ethics seminar he confronts precisely this particular impasse in Freud and indeed returns to the tricky subject of the injunction to 'Love one's neighbour'. As we saw in our discussion of *Civilisation and its Discontents* Freud went to extraordinary lengths to argue against this injunction. In the Ethics seminar, Lacan concurs with Freud that it is a very silly idea though his rejection is much more muted. It is in Seminar XX that we could say that Lacan takes a stand that opposes Freud's. What Lacan offers as a lifeline in Seminar XX is none other than Love. He is well aware that that line of development is fraught with difficulty. One has only to return to Freud to see the struggle that he has with the idea to grasp that very significant things are at stake in its acceptance.

Let us reflect again on some of the key links between the Ethics seminar and Encore.

First of all Lacan makes a number of explicit references to the Ethics seminar in Encore.

Secondly, there are references to feminine sexuality in the Ethics seminar that are relatively little remarked upon. Thirdly it is the mother linked to *Das Ding* that Freud confronted and balked at and that Lacan begins to deal with in the Ethics seminar and ultimately deals with in the Other *jouissance* of Seminar XX.

We need here to remind ourselves that Lacan continues to privilege desire even when he makes *jouissance* the centre of his investigation as in Seminar XX. Let us remind ourselves of the centrality of the law of desire. While *jouissance* is what Lacan is interrogating in seminar XX, his identification of two types of *jouissance* is predicated on their production via the signifier. Phallic *jouissance* is the bit of *jouissance* rendered to the subject of the signifier. Other *jouissance* is not available to the subject of the signifier in as much as they are subject to the signifier but it is precisely the action of the signifier that allows the production of Other *jouissance* as an outside to the signifier that nevertheless ex-sists. This dimension of the real that cannot be spoken about can only be enjoyed beyond the subject of the signifier and only fleetingly at that.

It is the functioning of the Law as instituted in the assumption of the signifier that makes it possible to talk at all about an Other *jouissance* - precisely as something that is beyond speech. It can be pointed to but it cannot be talked.

The constitution of subjectivity via the signifier produces an order and it is in this constitutive moment that a real outside the subject is also put in motion. It is not apprehendable through language because, like trauma, it is outside the symbolic network.

It is the insistence of this real that provides the momentum for something that Lacan says ‘ . . . is never not being written’ - this never not being written is the repetition and return of something that can only return after it has been constituted - it is the Other of the body. This Other of the body – is an affect - but transformed from anxiety into an affect that does deceive - guilt.

What Lacan accuses Freud of is that he couldn’t go beyond castration. What we propose to question in Freud is that he couldn’t go beyond hate and towards love.

There are a whole range of reasons given for people to feel guilt. Ultimately, the creation of the signifier *ex nihilo* seems to be the basis for a fundamental fault. It is a fault that produces anxiety. The rendering of anxiety in deceptive guilt is aimed at the Other, which is actually a void, a void threatening anxiety, but it nevertheless pleases the guilty to propose the existence of an Other who can be appealed to.

As we discussed in the previous chapter Freud's castration formulations are different for the boy and the girl - he sees it and she sees it – but they have different responses. These are articulated in Lacan's theory of sexuation and result in a differential relation to the law and thereby the superego. Sometimes she wants to lead him toward her Other *jouissance*. He, most emphatically, and entirely understandably, does not want to go. This may be one source of the anxiety engendered in some men by some women and the fundamental mistrust of them.

Das Ding and this Other *jouissance*, involve an affect, the affect par excellence, that does not deceive. Guilt is precisely an affect that does deceive. When someone avows conscious guilt or is clearly impelled by the destructive trends of unconscious guilt, what we are witnessing is an attempt to deceive. It is a subject's effort to represent and thereby access a forbidden enjoyment by reference precisely to the forbiddenness. We could say that guilt is the *jouissance* of prohibition. And while forbiddenness functions differently for the masculine and feminine subjects, guilt will play a markedly different part in their psychical make-up. Freud was right in what he saw but stopped short of knowing what to make of it. Lacan has shown us the way forward from Freud's impasse.

Lacan argues in Seminar XX that Freud stopped short. He says that he himself was held back by a problem relating to knowledge. Freud gives an example of his stopping short in relation to knowledge in 1933,

Theoretically we are in fact in doubt whether we should suppose that all the aggressiveness that has returned from the external world is bound by the super-ego and accordingly turned against the ego, or that a part of it is carrying on its mute and uncanny activity as a free destructive instinct in the ego and the id. A distribution of the latter kind is the more probable; but we know nothing more about it.'

Freud, (1933[ 1932] p. 109

Freud's recourse to the death drive and a primal aggression in the nineteen-thirties are a way of stopping short in relation to knowledge. It is precisely in relation to questions of this knowledge that Lacan begins something in the Ethics seminar which he only resolves in seminar XX. How to 'know' Other *jouissance* remains a considerable problem but Lacan's delineation of its place, its effects, its origin and its existence make further research possible where Freud had erected a barrier.

We began this enquiry into guilt by raising questions about the origin of this strange but ubiquitous affect and in particular about the oppressiveness of pathological guilt. This is a question at the heart of psychoanalysis and not least because it relates to the 'negative therapeutic reaction' or, apparent desire to remain ill, found so frequently by Freud. What we have found suggests that it is intimately related to anxiety and that that anxiety is of a near universal type. We have shown that Lacan provides us with tools to study that anxiety and that it is related to his idea of Other *jouissance*. This



Other *jouissance*, in turn, is shown to derive from the construction of the signified world and that while it does not pre-date it, it does function beyond it. This Other *jouissance* is not mute but on the contrary, calls to those subjected to the signifier.

We can now translate Freud's idea that the superego is less inexorable in women than in men with greater nuance. In as much as men are masculine subjects and wholly captured by the signifier they are inexorably subject to the law. In as much as women are feminine subjects and are not are not wholly captured by the signifier they are not inexorably subject to the law.

The idea of guilt as a deceiver opens up other avenues for research, in particular in relation to guilt and sexual difference.

There are also issues to be explored in the clinical strategies best adopted in relation to guilt that take into account its deceptive quality. And discussion of ethical practice needs to be de-linked from guilt and perhaps, following Lacan's lead in Seminar XX, it can be developed better via an understanding of love.

## **Appendix X**

### **Translation issues**

This appendix attempts to consider translation issues relevant to material used in the thesis.

#### General point

Theories of language, principally those developed in the twentieth century, have impacted upon the way we are able to think about translation. The Sapir/Whorf hypothesis<sup>1</sup> of 1929, de Saussure's groundbreaking work on structural linguistics and contributions from a range of others including Austin and Jacobson mean that nowadays few would act with the idea that languages are cultural variations expressing generic referents. Following de Saussure, in particular, languages are viewed as relatively discrete symbolic systems albeit with interesting overlapping content. An important implication of this viewpoint, for translation, is that what will count as good translation owes more to conventions of language usage and a translator's knowledge of those conventions than some fictitious guarantee of authentic meaning between terms that putatively refer to the same 'reality'. The discussion below will try to accommodate this view when dealing with specific terms though it is difficult not to fall into a mode of expression along the lines of – 'What German word does Freud use for guilt?' – where it is tempting to think of the English signifier 'guilt' as meaning some 'thing' rather than being just another signifier.

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<sup>1</sup> The essence of the hypothesis may be summed up in the following quote from Edward Sapir. 'No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached' Sapir, 1958 [1929], p. 69.

## General issues in the translation of Freud.

There is a significant and growing body of literature on issues in the translation of Freud's work and problems that have arisen because of inadequate or questionable translation. Several of Freud's earliest translators into English have been criticised for their partial translation, for example, Jones for his attempts to smarten up Freud's use of everyday German terms by rendering them into Greek and Latin rather than everyday English and Strachey for paying insufficient attention to detail and for apparently Anglifying some of Freud's formulations, that is, not just rendering Freud's text into English but reconfiguring some of Freud's lines of argument so that they accord more closely with English philosophical traditions.<sup>2</sup> Strachey was responsible for extensive translation of Freud's work into English and thereby for much of Freud's reception by English (and sometimes other) readers. We will therefore consider some specific issues linked to his translation.

Freud's first substantial work translated into English was 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (*Die Traum Deutung*) translated by the American A.A. Brill in 1913. Sporadic translation of other works continued into the nineteen twenties when James Strachey and his wife Alix began translating Freud's works into English. They translated many of Freud's works throughout the thirties and forties. In 1953, Strachey began the substantial task of editing Freud's collected works into what is known as 'The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud' – a project he was to see to completion in 1966. In that year, Strachey published some comments on his process of translation that describe the difficulties as he saw them. A significant problem concerned the reliability of the German originals that he was translating,

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<sup>2</sup> See Strachey's own comments discussed below, Kauffman (1980), Bettelheim (1983) and Burgoyne (2009).

The translations in this edition [Standard Edition] are in general based on the last German editions published in Freud's lifetime. One of my main difficulties, however, has been the unsatisfactory nature of the German texts. The original publications, brought out under Freud's immediate supervision, are as a rule trustworthy; but, as time went on and responsibility was delegated to other hands, errors began to creep in. This even applies to the first collected edition, published in Vienna between the Wars and destroyed by the Nazis in 1938. The second collected edition, which was printed in England under the greatest difficulties during the Second War, is largely a photocopy of its predecessor, but naturally shows signs of the circumstances in which it was produced. This, however, remains the only obtainable German edition of Freud's works with any claim to completeness.

Strachey, 1966, p. xv

A further significant logistical problem concerned the chaotic state of the rights to publish Freud's work which Strachey lays at the door of '... Freud's completely unbusinesslike handling of the copyrights in his translations.' (1966, p. xxi)

Strachey also laments the limitations imposed on the project by lack of finances and infrastructure:

Another source of deficiency, which the charitable critic will bear in mind, is that the *Standard Edition* has been in many ways an amateur production. It has been the work of a few individuals usually engaged in other occupations, and it has been without the background of any established academic machine ready to provide either personnel or accommodation.

Strachey, 1966, p. xviii

Given these huge problems it is commendable indeed that Strachey took on and persisted with the task.

We turn now to discussion of what we could call the issues relating to translation as such, rather than those concerning limitations imposed by external factors. As noted above, Strachey has been criticised for diminishing detail and over-Anglifying Freud's ideas. He has also been criticised for introducing a type of 'scientific' ethos into Freud's work that is not in the original.<sup>3</sup> Other general criticisms concern issues of style and tone.

Let us begin this discussion by situating what Strachey thought he was doing, according to his own testimony. Who was he translating and editing for? Strachey tells us that '... from first to last I have framed this edition with the 'serious student' in mind' (p. xv) and describes his intended reader as one who can '... form a judgement of his own' (p. xvii). How then does Strachey situate himself in his address to this reader? In a much quoted and sometimes lampooned statement, Strachey says,

The imaginary model which I have always kept before me is of the writings of some English man of science of wide education born in the middle of the nineteenth century.

p. xix

Would it be stretching credibility too far to suggest that Strachey identifies himself as this well-educated English-man born in the mid-nineteenth century and that his other/reader, to whom he addresses his work, is the serious student of this scientist/mentor? I am content to merely suggest this here as this is not the place to engage in speculation about

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<sup>3</sup> The word 'scientific' is in parentheses because it is a word that is significantly over-determined. While there is no doubt that Freud saw his work as 'science', what Freud took 'science' to mean and what Strachey took 'science' to mean seem to differ. Freud's idea of science owes a great deal to his Germanic cultural context while Strachey's seems to owe more to a very English tradition. In this context it is also important to note that Freud was himself consciously involved in re-thinking and developing the notion of 'science' to accommodate the groundbreaking scientific work that he was doing. Strachey, by contrast, appears to rely on relatively conservative and positivist notions of science that had dominated mid-nineteenth century English natural sciences.

the identificatory positions adopted by Strachey, the man.<sup>4</sup> However, we can posit communication from the English man of science to his serious student as Strachey's imagined editor/translator-reader relation. Two main arguments have been made about Strachey's positioning of the work in this way. On the one hand commentators see in this an admission of the unwarranted and problematic philosophical Anglification of Freud's work. On the other hand, commentators raise profound concerns about the notion of science underpinning Strachey's translation choices. I want to consider two slightly different questions. First of all, does Strachey have in his imaginary world not just 'some' 'English man of science' etc. but some particular 'English man of science' to act as his model. That, we can never know for sure, though we might generate some potential clues. The other question concerns this model being '... born in the middle of the nineteenth-century'. There is something decidedly odd about this. Of course, Freud could be described as having been 'born in the middle of the nineteenth century', in 1856 so there is a *prima facie* case for choosing someone born at the same time, albeit, one presumes, in England, as the imagined English scientist/author who will take Freud's place. But if we consider this further some interesting issues arise.

Freud was born in 1856, Psychoanalysis was born in the 1890s, Freud's principal publications (and virtually all of what Strachey calls his 'Psychological Works') were published in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Strachey began his translation of Freud in the 1920s, the Standard Edition in 1953 and published his explanatory note on his 'imaginary model' in 1966, that is, one hundred and ten years after Freud's birth. What does this suggest about Strachey's conception of his project? He intended to translate Freud as if he could substitute an English man of science born, let's say, in 1856, in England, as the author of

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<sup>4</sup> It is interestingly ironic that this '... imaginary model which I have always kept before me...' appears a potential definition of both Freud's 'ideal-ego' (*Ideal-Ich*), and 'ego-ideal' (*Ich-Ideal*), the two terms being among those of Strachey's translations to have generated particular controversy. Strachey has been charged with inconsistently translating the two terms as if they were interchangeable. (Lacan, 1953-4).

<sup>5</sup> The obvious notable exception is 'The Interpretation of Dreams' which bears the first German publication date of 1900 (reputedly because Freud wanted it associated with the new century), but was in fact published in late 1899.

Freud's works. What justification is there for this? If Strachey intended to change the location from Vienna<sup>6</sup> to England, what is to be gained by retaining the year of birth? This implies first of all that in translation, geography and linguistic culture are changeable but temporality is not. What is it that supports Strachey's implied idea that the English employed by the man of science born in 1856 in England is a better medium for translation than the English of someone born in, say, 1879 (Jones/Wales), 1887 (Strachey/England), 1920 (a serious student in 1953)<sup>7</sup> or 1940 (a serious student in the 1970s by which time the whole Standard Edition would be available and while we are speculating in this way – why not get rid of the 'born' category and just go for English of the time of translation – (1910s-1960s). Strachey seems to have the idea that someone who learned English in the 1850s would offer a more authentic basis for the translation of Freud's German learned in the 1850s, as if he imagines a kind of shared intellectual culture that pervades the times but transcends languages. It is as if here we have the negation of ethno-centrism and in its place the questionable substitution of temporocentrism. In this respect, Strachey is no different from most of the translators of his era but this issue suggests some questions for later accounts of translation.

The possible alternatives to this are that Strachey did indeed have a particular 'man of science' model based on the idea of someone or several people that he had 'cathected' (to use his much criticised term) or that Strachey saw Freud precisely as 'an English man of science' who just happened not to have been born in England.

The criticism of Strachey, that he gives us an Anglified Freud would, of course, in general, be supported by this statement of Strachey's. The criticism takes the form of arguing that Strachey has imposed on Freud's concepts in translation, associations that

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<sup>6</sup> Freud, of course, was not actually born in Vienna but moved there with his family as a small child.

<sup>7</sup> One point worth considering in this context is Strachey's proximity to, and sometimes involvement in, the Bloomsbury Group. Being acquainted with the likes of Virginia Woolf would perhaps instil some hesitation about the employment of 1920s English and even what that might mean.

accord more closely with English notions of science than with the Germanic scientific culture out of which they arise.

There are two strands to this criticism. Ornston, for example, argues that Freud is made to sound much more English than he should and that the beautiful German that Freud writes in becomes ‘ . . . stone-cold syntheses . . . ’ in Strachey’s hands (1985, p.4).

Bernard Burgoyne provides a telling example of the way in which Strachey’s re-rendering of Freud radically alters the way in which Freud conceptualises his scientific enterprise, and this in an extended discussion by Freud, of science itself.

As Burgoyne has noted, the first six pages of ‘Instincts and Their Vicissitudes’ (Strachey’s much criticised translation of ‘*Triebe und Triebschicksale*’, are about science (Burgoyne, 2009). Burgoyne shows how Strachey’s questionable translation renders Freud’s astute considerations of science into an English scientific position, specifically in the adoption of ‘phenomena’ when ‘appearances’ would have been more correct and that this has inevitable and problematic consequences for the uptake of Freud by readers of English.

As an honourable upper-middle-class English gentleman himself, Strachey argues (in terms that are unmistakably commensurate with, at least putatively, upper-middle-class English gentlemanly behaviour and culture of the mid-twentieth century) that he has tried to be resolutely honest and felicitous in his translation of Freud. In particular, he explains what he views as his light touch in terms of allowing himself, or anyone else, to intrude into the integrity of Freud’s writing.

All these various kinds of editorial intervention have been governed by a single principle. I have aimed, consistently I hope, at allowing Freud to be his own expositor. Where there are obscurities I have looked for explanations in Freud’s own writings; where there seem to be contradictions I have been content with laying the fact before the reader and enabling him



to form a judgement of his own. I have done my best to escape being didactic, and have avoided any claim to *ex cathedra* authority. But, if I have withheld my own opinions, especially on matters of theory, it will be found that I have equally withheld *all* later commentaries and elaborations and criticisms from any source whatsoever. So that, almost without exception, this edition contains no references at all to other writers, however distinguished – apart, of course, from those quoted by Freud himself. (The immense proliferation of psycho-analytic literature since his death would in any case have imposed this decision.) The student should thus be able to approach Freud's writings uninfluenced by extraneous opinion.

p. xvii

Perhaps what we can say about this, is that, in trying to claim for himself as neutral a place as possible, Strachey fails to comprehend that his is a position as motivated and over-determined as everyone else's.<sup>8</sup> There is no place from which to speak that does not have a history, a culture and, thereby, a limited set of choices.

Andrew Parker has written a wonderfully erudite and entertaining chapter bringing the Freud translation business up to date and at the same time raising very interesting issues about the occlusion of Yiddish in Freud and Marx. Parker points out that the 'literary' translations of Freud for Penguin under the guidance of Adam Phillips does not differ markedly from the Strachey editions and discusses the forthcoming translation of Freud's neurological papers and revision of the Standard Edition by Mark Solms. Solms is a neuropsychologist and self-styled neuropsychanalyst with a project to link neuropsychology and psychoanalysis. It is evident from interviews that he has given that his revisions of the Standard Edition will owe more to developments in biology than to developments in translation studies. He has stated that 'My Freud is the same as

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<sup>8</sup> I acknowledge, in passing, that my use of 'over-determined' owes everything to Strachey's translation of Freud's *Überdeterminierung* or *mehrfache Determinierung* though I came across it first in Althusser (English translated from French). In an interesting twist, Freud may have acquired the genesis of the idea from the English Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham via the work of J.S. Mill. See Watson (1958).

Strachey's Freud' (Jones, 2007) though it is likely that Solms's Strachey will be even more of a caricature of 'science' than Strachey's 'English man of science'.

### **Translation of Lacan's works**

While the core of this appendix is concerned with the translation of Freud's works it is also important to acknowledge the vexed question of the translation of Lacan's works into English.

We noted above that Strachey complained about various contextual issues that impacted on his work as editor and translator of Freud's work. There are comparable and additional factors that make the translation of Lacan's work very difficult. The posthumous ownership, management and control of Lacan's work remains largely a family business and this has been a source of frustration for would-be translators. While Lacan published a significant body of work he also delivered extensive seminars orally and the variable transcription of these provides rich soil for claims and counter-claims concerning authenticity. So-called 'pirate' editions of Lacan's work are available in English pending or substituting for, the authorised publication and translation of transcribed seminars.

Beyond the legal domain, the translation of Lacan's work poses particular difficulties for a translator. Lacan's psychoanalytic theory relies upon a fundamental thesis about the instability, power and precociousness of language. In much of his writing and in his seminars Lacan, notoriously, allows these features of language to the fore, at least in part, as a demonstration of what he is trying to convey theoretically. In part, he is just having fun. His punning, metaphors, in-house jokes and general play with words lay bare the problems of language and thereby the problems facing a translator. Translating Lacan is a multiplied difficulty. Russell Grigg provides a particularly clear example:

A further challenge one faces is the ever-present possibility of different meanings. This may well be a source of fertility in Lacan's original texts, but it can be a source of frustration for the translator given that it may be impossible to retain all possible meanings in translation. One can't footnote them all, as there are too many, so one has to choose. Who is to say which choice to make? 'sens' as both meaning and direction; 'désir de la mère' as both the mother's desire and desire for the mother; 'instance' as agency, instance, example, insistence; 'entendre' as to hear and to understand. This is of course a difficulty facing all translators but it is very acute in Lacan's case, where it's not just that there is polysemy, but that the polysemy may itself be the point: consider the discussions of imaginary rivalry between ego and semblable in which Lacan plays upon the homophones 'tu es', you are, and 'tuer', to kill.

Grigg, 2000

British, American and Australian academics have, since the 1970s, variously translated single articles and Lacan's major writings including a selection of his *Écrits*, and Lacan himself published a small number of papers in English. While some translations of his work have been almost universally derided<sup>9</sup>, it is too early to come to any general verdict on the project overall – not least because it is less an overall project and more a piecemeal affair. This has changed to some extent in the choice of Bruce Fink as a consistent translator who has been responsible for the vast majority of Lacan translations in English in recent years and who, in particular, has retranslated the complete *Écrits* and the seminar *Encore* which plays a prominent role in this thesis. Fink has been criticised for Americanising Lacan's ideas and for obscuring detail and nuance.<sup>10</sup> Like Strachey he must be commended for taking on a most daunting task and for entering into public discussion with others over his translation choices. He also, helpfully, takes up an option not available to Strachey, that of publishing errata on his University website.

Dennis Porter translated Seminar VII on 'The Ethics of Psychoanalysis', the other main Lacan work examined in the thesis. There appears to be no published secondary discussion of Porter's translation, other than a footnote by Slavoj Žižek who notes the

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<sup>9</sup> Sheridan's translations of a selection from the *Écrits* and Seminar XI (1977).

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Nobus (1999) and Chadwick (2001).

difference between Porter and Fink in their rendering of Lacan's famed '*ne pas céder sur son désir*' – arguably the most iconic and definitive phrase of the seminar, and possibly even of Lacan's entire work.<sup>11</sup>

Porter has written, very eloquently, on translation. He critiques Paul de Man's misreading of Walter Benjamin. De Man had argued that Benjamin's thesis proposed 'the impossibility of translation'. Porter shows that this is far from Benjamin's view and suggests that despite appearances, Lacan has more in common with Benjamin, despite the latter's pre-structuralist position, than de Man's impossibility argument based on the absence of originals.

. . . Lacan's lesson for the translator is the antithesis of de Man's. It is because there is no original – “always already disarticulated” – that translation is possible. A writer equally as much as a translator operates between the poles of faithfulness and license: faithfulness to an intentionality that only recognises itself once it is already mediated, and license from a linguistic law that is curiously open to subversion. The difference between Lacan and de Man can be summed up in one word: the unconscious. Translation is impossible for de Man because without that founding concept of psychoanalysis, the resistance to human meaning of the order of tropes in one language is only compounded by the resistance of a similar order in a second language.

Porter, 1991 p.158

Porter's argument demonstrates that while all translation is a precarious business it is far from a hopeless exercise and its real virtue lies in the impact on the target language of the new significations imported from the translated language.

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<sup>11</sup> “Dennis Porter renders the phrase *ne pas céder sur son désir* as ‘giving ground relative to one's desire’. Bruce Fink, alternatively, opts for ‘not to give up on his or her desire’, in the sense that the analysand must not ‘let the Other's desire take precedence over his or her own’. Žižek (2005) p.54n. While one might take issue with Fink's explanatory note, Žižek's point here is to do with theory not translation as such.

## Discussion of terms.<sup>12</sup>

In the next section I will discuss specific Freudian terms focussed on in the thesis

**Schuld** – translated as ‘guilt’

This term has a number of, apparently related, connotations in German. Here are a few of the most common:

<i>Das ist meine <b>Schuld</b>.</i>	This seems to signify ‘fault’ – as in ‘It is my fault’. ‘I am responsible for it’. ‘I am the one to blame’. ‘I am the one who is guilty’.
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A related sense of ‘responsibility’ is encapsulated in

<i>Wer trägt die <b>Schuld</b> am Vorfall 911?</i>	Who carries the responsibility/guilt for 911?
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It is used to signify ‘debt’, ‘guilt’ and ‘owing’ usually relating to money, favours or obligations.

<i>Ich stehe in deiner <b>Schuld</b>.</i>	I am standing in your owing. I am indebted to you.
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There is also the sense of sin evoked in the biblical,

<i>Dir ist <b>deine Schuld</b> vergeben.</i>	Your wrongdoings are forgiven. You will be absolved. (The implication being that this is stated by (a forgiving) God or his earthly representatives).
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<sup>12</sup> I offer grateful thanks to my friend Katharina Erne who entered enthusiastically into detailed discussion of Freud’s terms and guided me through questions of idiom, nuance, spelling and grammar.

*Schuldgefühl* – translated as sense or feeling of guilt

Laplanche and Pontalis describe this as a ‘. . . term applied very broadly by psycho-analysis’ and proceed to list a range of ways in which it is used. The categories listed are:

Emotional states

From remorse to ‘apparently ridiculous self-reproaches’

‘a vague sense of personal unworthiness’

‘a system of unconscious motivations that accounts for ‘failure syndromes’, delinquent behaviour, self-inflicted suffering, etc.’ Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, P.414

Freud also uses the formulation ‘*Schuldbewusstsein*’ about which the editors of the Standard Edition say the following in a footnote to “ ‘unconscious consciousness of guilt’ ” (Freud, 1915a, p. 177)

[German ‘*Schuldbewusstsein*’, a common equivalent for ‘*Schuldgefühl*’, ‘sense of guilt’.]

Freud, 1915a,177n

Under Strachey’s editorship then, an equivalence is suggested between ‘*Schuldbewusstsein*’ and ‘*Schuldgefühl*’. Since these terms are at the core of the theoretical focus of the thesis we need to examine this contention. It will be seen that the (mis)-translation of these terms indexes profound theoretical issues in the linked theories of ‘guilt’, ‘consciousness’ and ‘unconsciousness’. Strachey’s equation of ‘*Schuldbewusstsein*’ and ‘*Schuldgefühl*’ attempts an elision of what, for Freud, is an acknowledged problem. In more than one place Freud regrets his own formulation of an

‘unconscious sense of guilt’ or ‘an unconscious consciousness of guilt’ (Freud, 1915a, 1932).<sup>13</sup> While Freud’s reservations seem to apply to the theoretical contradictions implied by an ‘unconscious consciousness’ an ‘unconscious sense’ and even an ‘unconscious feeling’ his struggle to find workable theoretical solutions with which to characterise some experience named ‘guilt’ is overt. Clearly it is not Strachey’s responsibility to solve Freud’s theoretical difficulty. However Strachey’s equation of ‘*Schuldbewusstsein*’ and ‘*Schuldgefühl*’ attempts to gloss two fundamental and difficult points of intersection in Freud’s work – the demarcation of thought and feeling and the border between consciousness and unconsciousness. Given that Freud’s greatest achievement was the theorisation and exploration of unconsciousness, his efforts to think guilt’s relation to consciousness and unconsciousness should have been accorded more dignified consideration than Strachey supplies.

Laplanche and Pontalis try to work with Freud’s problem. First of all they highlight that there is a problem:

... The words ‘feeling’ and ‘sense’ should be employed with caution in this connection, since the subject may not feel guilty at the level of conscious experience.’

Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.414

Laplanche and Pontalis try to get round the problem of the ‘unconscious sense of guilt’ by quoting Freud on the relation between a perception in the ego arising in response to criticism from the super-ego. They continue,

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<sup>13</sup> The theoretical issues associated with this are discussed in the thesis chapters 2 and 5.

From this standpoint the expression ‘unconscious sense of guilt’ takes on a more radical sense than the one it had when it meant an unconsciously motivated feeling, for now it is the relationship of the super-ego to the ego that can be unconscious and manifested in subjective effects from which any felt guilt may – in the most extreme instance – be absent.

They proceed to refer to Freud’s discussions of criminals whose crimes are the result of oppressive guilt feelings and, not, as is more popularly assumed, the cause of their feeling guilty (Freud, 1916).

Laplanche and Pontalis do therefore acknowledge that there is something of a problem around the idea of an ‘unconscious sense of guilt’ but their limited discussion fails to get beyond where Freud had got to at least as early as 1916.

They go on to say,

Freud was not insensitive to the paradoxical effect produced when he spoke of an *unconscious sense of guilt*; he admitted that, for this reason, the term ‘need for punishment’ might be more fitting.

Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p. 415

*Strafbedürfnis* – translated as ‘need for punishment’

*Straf* (*e*) – punishment

*Bedürfnis* – ‘need’



From the verb *strafen* – to punish, exemplified in the First World War slogan

<b><i>Gott strafe England</i></b>	May God punish England. The source of the English use of <i>strafe</i> to refer to aerial bombardment and implying ‘to punish, attack, damage or assault’.
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Laplanche and Pontalis offer the following comments:

Requirement of internal origin postulated by Freud as lying at the root of the behaviour of certain subjects who are shown by psycho-analytic investigation to be seeking out unpleasant or humiliating situations, from which they derive enjoyment (moral masochism).

The existence of phenomena implying self-punishment aroused Freud’s interest very early on: among such phenomena were *dreams* of punishment, which resemble a tribute paid to the censorship for a wish-fulfilment and – above all – the symptoms of *obsessional neurosis*.

Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p. 260

***Selbstvorwurf*** - translated as ‘self-reproach’.

***Selbst*** - self

***Wurf*** – throw (from the verb *werfen* – to throw)

***Vorwurf*** is commonly translated as ‘throwing something in front of someone’. The way that ***Selbstvorwurf*** is used can be more complicated than the literal sense of throwing something in front of yourself. A way of explaining it might be to say that either ‘you throw something disproportionate in front of yourself’ or ‘you pile up obstacles in front of yourself so that you have difficulty getting past them’.<sup>14</sup> These additional connotations

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<sup>14</sup> An idiomatic response to someone engaging in *Selbstvorwurf* might be ‘*Mach keinen Elefanten aus einer Fliege*’ ‘Don’t make an elephant out of a fly’ roughly equivalent to the English ‘You are making a mountain out of a molehill’. It is interesting here, given the focus of the thesis, that the German form is that of an order while the English an accusation/ judgement.

of unnecessariness and excess accord well with Freud's depiction of self-reproach as often neurotic. *Selbstvorwurf* is usually linked to psychical pain.

*Selbstvorwurf* could then be translated as self-accusing or self-blaming and it further might imply self-martyring. The key idea is that you are making yourself responsible for something that you may not be responsible for and, possibly also, that you are definitely not responsible for. The idea that the reproach of oneself is unnecessary or excessive carries with it the idea that a punishment of self is at stake and even, possibly, that a desire for or enjoyment of punishing oneself is at stake. The idea that you are loading more on yourself than is objectively merited fits well with the lines of argument put forward in the thesis.<sup>15</sup>

Neither 'Reproach' nor 'Self-reproach' are discussed in their own right in Laplanche and Pontalis's extended dictionary but they do mention 'self-reproach' in their discussion of 'Sense of Guilt, Guilt Feeling'

The sense of guilt was first encountered mainly in obsessional neurotics, in the form of self-reproaches and obsessive ideas against which the subject struggles because they seem reprehensible to him; and also in the form of the shame attached to the subject's precautionary measures themselves.

Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p. 414

### **Concluding remarks**

Perhaps we could conclude by mentioning a stylistic complaint levelled at James Strachey by Darius Ornston Junior'

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<sup>15</sup> I want to include a rider to this. It is possible, and I am unable to investigate this at the moment, that the 'unnecessary' and 'excessive' connotations in current German that I am discussing here were influenced/produced by Freud's use of *Selbstvorwurf*.

He rarely tried to convey Freud's bemused wit and dry humor;  
nor did he try to explain Freud's mesmerizing ambiguity.

Ornston 1985 p. 3

English readers of Freud might feel cheated when reading this. Apparently there is an even more witty and humorous Freud, full of interesting ambiguity, who has not been properly introduced. This points up one of the persistent and interesting problems of translation – how to maintain or perhaps re-invent the richness and nuance of the translated language while retaining the integrity of the argument. However, despite and partly because of, Strachey's partial translation, there is no doubt that Freud has influenced English culture.

Porter's comments above show that while translation has been a problem for psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis itself may be an important resource in thinking about translation.

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